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COLUMBIA
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REVIEW

NATIONAL MEDIA MONITOR
PRESS • RADIO • TV

SPECIAL SECTION:
WATERGATE AND THE PRESS

The Howard Baker Boom
Televised Hearings: The Impact Out There
Some Media Errors and Puzzles
Where Was The White House Press Corps?

●
Hunter Thompson
VS.
Theodore H. White

Loathing and Ignorance on the Campaign Trail
by Wayne C. Booth
●

5

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. . . to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent.

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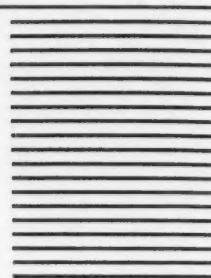
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Passing comment

Agnew: condemned by leak?

In his farewell address on Oct. 15, 1973, former Vice President Agnew took a parting shot at the news media.

"Late this summer my fitness to continue in office came under attack when accusations against me made in the course of a grand jury investigation were improperly and unconscionably leaked in detail to the news media.

"I might add that the attacks were increased by daily publication of the wildest rumor and speculation, much of it bearing no resemblance to the information being given the prosecutors.

"All this was done with full knowledge that it was prejudicial to my civil rights.

"The news media editorially deplored these violations of the traditional secrecy of such investigations but at the same time many of the most prestigious were ignoring their own counsel by publishing every leak they could get their hands on.

"From time to time I made public denials of those scurrilous and inaccurate reports and challenged the credibility of their sources. . . .

"I repeat and I emphasize that denial of wrongdoing tonight."

Until the sudden resolution of his case, Agnew was prepared to carry his fight against the press into court; his lawyers had issued, with judicial permission, a fistful of subpoenas designed to coerce the revelation of sources from Washington reporters—a move that properly met with near unanimous resistance from the reporters and their employers.

Agnew's attack was in the grand tradition of political attacks on the press in general and of the past practices of the Nixon-Agnew Administration in particular—unspecified allegations of falsehood, attributions of malice, resorting to suppressive means. Even the not unfriendly *New York Times*

columnist, William Safire, warned Agnew on Oct. 8 that he was using the law "like a bludgeon to fight the wrong fight—that old grudge fight against the press."

Safire went on to state succinctly the case for the media: "Government officials and officers of the court who willfully use leaks to get an indictment or a conviction reduce our civil liberty; newsmen, the recipients of the leaks, have a right to protect sources within reasonable limits, which in turn protects civil liberty." (It was curious to hear the Justice Department, whose previous management had stirred up the subpoena crisis of 1969-70, support the media's position.)

Simply put, the press had the choice of using leaked information or nothing of substance in covering a story of undoubted national significance. "Attacking the leaks by means of interrogating prosecutors and the press," observed the *Christian Science Monitor*, "is a diversion from the public's principal objective of finding out just what Mr. Agnew himself did or did not do." Without the use of such information, the American public might not have been aware of the investigation directed at the second highest officer of the government or, in fact, of the Constitutional crisis that the case threatened to bring about. In this instance, there was a public stake in knowing of this crisis *while it was taking place*, for the succession to the White House was at stake. Although it was difficult for journalists to check fully the accuracy of leaked information, the press, regardless of Agnew's accusation, appeared in retrospect to have described the developing situation—at least the activities of the prosecutors—with fidelity. It is that public service that is journalism's vindication in this case.

This is not to say that the treatment of the Agnew case did not raise serious professional questions. These were put forward as early as August, when David S. Broder of the *Washington Post* made a charge (used in bowdlerized form in Agnew's address) that newspapers were ignoring on their editorial pages what their reporters were doing. Newspapers printing leaks from the investigation, Broder charged, were "setting lower standards . . . than the law applies to shop owners when it orders them not to 'fence' stolen goods." He

added: "By trafficking in leaked information on Agnew the press has begun to accept the thoroughly un-American notion that some people—namely, prominent politicians—are guilty until proven innocent." (Within a month, Broder himself felt compelled to use unattributable information—not, admittedly, from a grand jury—to predict that the vice president would resign.)

Is there anything to Broder's accusation? The answer is a qualified yes. But the problem was not simply use of leaked information, but *proper use*. For there can be little doubt that even serious readers, listeners and viewers were given a precipitate impression of Agnew's guilt. This impression arose, not from malicious practice, but from the nature of the game of journalism as it is played in this post-Watergate era.

Inexorably, Washington journalists treated the Agnew case in a round of competitive disclosures—reflecting the tendency to present one's own, one's latest nugget as the prime substance of a story. This is a syndrome that has been recognizable, of course, ever since the old hourly-replate days of afternoon newspapers. Today it takes a more glamorous form: there are enormous rewards in opportunity and reputation for successful players. Saul Friedman of the Knight Newspapers, a seasoned journalist who wrote one of the earliest comprehensive stories on the case, acknowledged as much when he said to the Washington Post's ombudsman, Robert C. Maynard: "I wouldn't sit here and claim that I didn't also think of this as a damn good story."

Such competition is healthy, even indispensable; it contributed to the Watergate disclosures of the Post's famous Woodward-Bernstein team. But journalists must beware of its potential disruptiveness and imbalance, its emphasis on the fresh, unstable element in a story, as opposed to totality and continuity. In the Agnew instance, there were times when coverage tended to lose sight of the preliminary nature of the proceedings, of the lack of judicially tested proof, and of the partially hidden maneuvering in the administration that led to Agnew's resignation. Perhaps the most sensationalized such instance—and certainly the best known—was the play given to a story by Fred Graham of CBS. On Sept. 22, Graham quoted a statement

made by Assistant Attorney General Henry Petersen: "We've got the evidence. We've got it cold." Such a statement, used baldly as it was in newspaper pickups, is almost impossible to check, or to balance.

But what is wrong with such use? Nothing, technically speaking. This and similar instances do not violate current journalistic practice, nor do they usually present any literal untruth. Yet they inevitably tended to present the vice president as closer to condemnation and ouster than he may have stood at that particular moment; indeed, the press may have looked as if it were nudging him.

It is not proposed here that journalists relinquish any of their aggressiveness or their use of the full range of sources, but that in presenting their findings they restrain their inclination to claim omniscience for their new wares, and to oversell them for competitive advantage.

Council vs. copy editor

The Minnesota Press Council, still tentatively carving out its jurisdiction, may have made a misstep in its decision involving the Worthington *Globe*, a daily of 16,725 circulation in the southwestern part of the state. The case arose in January, 1973, when the *Globe* printed a headline over an AP story about state legislative approval of two antiwar resolutions: REP. ERICKSON, REP. LONG VOTE CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR WAR, and followed with an editorial headed ERICKSON, LONG VOTE FOR STILL MORE WAR. The local legislators named complained about both headlines and about a paragraph in the editorial; ultimately they filed a complaint with the council, which issued its opinion in May. In regard to the editorial, the council decided that its discussion lay "well within the range of acceptable journalism," but complained about a paraphrase that appeared in quotation marks.

The real sore point was the page-one headline. The council condemned its wording as "inaccurate and unfair," and added: "We find it the newspaper's responsibility to correct its own headline error. The offended citizen should not have to bear the burden of writing the correction . . ."

Such an injunction strikes the *Review* as pre-

cisely the ground that a council ought to avoid. It is one thing to offer critical opinions of press performance, another to issue injunctions. The *Globe* made clear that it had offered every opportunity of access for reply and had even offered to forego the usual opportunity for rejoinder. But it could not in conscience agree that its headline was incorrect, or that the legislators had valid grounds for demanding correction.

In an able response to the decision, the *Globe* contended that "the newspaper would be required abjectly to lay aside its integrity and surrender its judgment to satisfy the committee's conclusion that . . . the newspaper must act to correct an 'error'—which some judge to be error and some judge not to be error." It admonished the council to hold to matters of principle, rather than looking over a copy editor's shoulder. Its summary of the case is worth quoting as a guide, not only in Minnesota, but also for bodies operating on the national scene:

"The Press Council . . . should be concerned only with general principle because, among other considerations:

"(1) The alternative of considering specific issues requires far more judicious and exhaustive investigation.

"(2) The specific rules (as for headlines) are not universally observed or recognized, they have no support in law or general use, they are imprecise. They are impossible to formulate. The mechanical realities, the function of brief and summarizing statement, the imprecision of all language, make them impossible to observe.

"(3) Specific determinations on 'general correctness, objectivity, etc.' are in themselves subjective and a contradiction of what is held up as exemplary and correct.

"(4) To step over the precipice of general principles into judgment on specific issues is to become bogged in the quagmire of partisan politics.

"(5) There is clear danger to a free society in inhibiting, disparaging, discouraging or diminishing free expression by censure, condemnation or the requirement of correction when error cannot certainly be determined. It is urgent that the Press Council recognize the real peril here."

Watergate, if . . .

The front page of the Boston *Globe* reproduced below is dated Sunday, June 18, 1972, but it did not actually appear until September 24, 1973. On the latter date, the *Globe* staff assembled it to show how the Watergate break-in might have been covered if everything known now had been known then. (The actual break-in story, from UPI, appeared on page 50 under a modest two-column headline: FIVE INTRUDERS CAUGHT IN DEMOCRATS' TOP OFFICE.)

In its editorial comment on the page, the *Globe* observed: "The most important thing about the Watergate coverage is that what was served here so laboriously and over 15 long months was the people's need to know all that is possible about their own government. And the chief purpose of reproducing what might have been page one on the morning after Watergate is not so much to interest or amuse, nor even to speculate. It is to show our readers how much they could be told about their government . . . if government were as accessible and open and as free with information for its citizens as most people would like it to be."



Scattered returns

Garbage in: Seymour K. Freiden, the journalist who was paid \$1,000 a week plus expenses in 1972 for joining the press corps with the Democratic candidate and passing along information to the Republicans, has been quoted as saying: "What I contributed was junk—they could have read it in the newspapers." Except that what they read in the newspapers might be only \$200-a-week junk.

Consumer news: A notable addition to consumer journalism is "Your Consuming Interests," a department now appearing in the *National Observer*. One issue (October 6), for example, had articles on eyeglass safety, tax help for the elderly, supermarket quantity shopping, the danger of sugary cereals, and ways to hold down funeral costs.

Taste treat: The Cleveland *Plain Dealer* is offering tumblers ornamented with reproductions of historic front pages from the paper. Cheerily, the promotion suggests: "Use one for your morning orange juice . . . The glasses are great conversation-starters at a party, too." Among the pages offered: the issue of November 23, 1963, describing the assassination of President Kennedy.

The FCC succession

This publication must be lumped with what *Broadcasting* magazine has called "the Nicholas Johnson clique of foundation-supported activists" who doubt the merits of the nomination of James H. Quello of Detroit to succeed Johnson on the Federal Communications Commission. It may be, as *Broadcasting* suggests, that Mr. Quello can transcend his background as a former executive in commercial broadcasting and act in the public interest. Nonetheless, without casting aspersions on Mr. Quello as an individual, it is hard not to see his appointment as a retrogressive step. An admirable study of television regulation by Brookings Institution specialists (see book note on *Economic Aspects of Television Regulation*, page 61) offers the judgment that if anything is wrong with FCC policies, it is their devotion to preserving the commercial broadcast system while stalling other

forms of broadcasting that the public might be willing to support. The naming of a former commercial broadcaster suggests that those who want the FCC to encourage alternative, competitive systems will be disappointed. Nor, it appears, will Mr. Quello be likely to carry on the energetic ombudsman functions that Mr. Johnson undertook.

What should the journalists' movement stand for?

Unlike the campaign that led to founding of the Newspaper Guild in the 1930s, the journalists' movement of the 1970s cannot offer remedies to tangible hardship. What it can do, if it so wills, is to help speed the transition of journalism from assembly-line work to a calling demanding the best of its practitioners. Many already in the field may (privately) not find this a particularly attractive goal, implying as it does that simply following orders and competently doing one's work are not enough. But there are signs aplenty that at least an active minority is seeking means to change the practice of journalism in this country.

Two important questions, among others, will face the small, struggling committees and local journalism reviews that now form the movement:

- 1) What positions will most effectively help create conditions of professional independence?
- 2) What kind of program can gain wide support among journalists?

One useful discussion has appeared recently in a pamphlet, "The Political Economy of American Newspapers: A Strategy for Change," by David Deitch, the Boston *Globe* columnist who won reinstatement via arbitration after being fired in 1972 for writing in a Boston alternative newspaper [PASSING COMMENT, July/Aug., 1972]. [Publisher: the Center for the Study of Development and Social Change, 1430 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.] His argument can be condensed roughly into this sequence: The function of journalists is not primarily to create a manufactured product but to provide access to the press for those requiring it; it is not possible to provide such access so long as the individual journalist has

no First Amendment protection applying to his own work; therefore those journalists who are conscious of their obligations should seek greater control over their output.

Those accustomed to traditional lines of authority in the media may regard Deitch's argument as a formula for anarchy. In fact, it is a useful formulation for the journalists' movement, for it adds to "reporter power" a public-interest element that has frequently been missing. One has suspected that many arguments for sharing authority have been based on a delusion that the good guys in journalism are all at the lower levels. There is no virtue in "reporter power" if it lacks a social consciousness or takes the attitude that journalism is nobody's business but the journalists'.

Journalists can justifiably seek more authority if they can demonstrate that they, and not only their employers, are acting in the public interest. Journalists, of course, are entitled to certain civil rights as individual citizens, but they can claim further rights as surrogates and investigators for those who do not have access to the media.

What ought journalists' rights to be? There should be considerable debate before any consensus. But Deitch's thesis and cases in the past three years suggest that these be considered:

—The right to refuse, without retaliation, assignments that the individual regards as unethical or degrading to professional standards.

—The right to refuse, without retaliation, to edit news material in a way that the individual journalist considers unethical or degrading to professional standards.

—The right to comment freely on issues involving journalism in any medium, including journalism reviews.

—The right (which has been guaranteed in the past in scattered Guild contracts) to refuse to have one's name attached to material that has been altered without consent.

—The right to refuse to disclose confidential sources without retaliation by the employer.

Clearly, this is only a fragmentary list. In practice, many of these rights are permitted. But they are not guaranteed. Not yet.

When the squeeze is on

Since August, the newsprint shortage has been forcing newspapers, which formerly thrived on elephantiasis, to cut back in size, and to eliminate for the time being both advertising and non-ad matter. Many have decided to drop television listings; others have cut back on comics; one even dropped the editorial page. In case the pinch continues, the *Review* offers here additional space-saving suggestions, based on observation of what has appeared in recent months. Why not eliminate:

- All cute animal pictures taken more than 25 miles from the city of publication?
- Overnight sports stories that contain little but guttural interviews with the contestants?
- Apocrypha centering on untraceable jokes or unbelievable coincidences?
- Stories on third- and fourth-place awards won by staff members in obscure press competitions?
- Rigidly stylized gavel-passing or check-handing photographs?
- Plugs for openings of local businesses that boost, rather than inform?
- Full reports of speeches or trips by the publisher or editor?
- Syndicated features from remote foreign spots, such as Pago Pago, used to fill an early page?
- Start-of-season photographs—e.g., first day of spring, with students or ducks sunning themselves?
- Editorials written in a cannery somewhere and shipped intact to the paper?
- Australian cheesecake?
- Syndicated interviews with television entertainment personalities who happen to have a new show in trouble?
- Almost any murder involving private persons committed out of state?
- Big, floating banners proclaiming "downtown shopping days"?
- Long stories on the newsprint shortage?

What can we learn from the failures of two quite different accounts of a presidential campaign?

Loathing and Ignorance on the campaign trail: 1972

WAYNE C. BOOTH

THE MAKING OF THE PRESIDENT 1972. By Theodore H. White. Atheneum, \$10.00.

FEAR AND LOATHING: ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL '72. By Dr. Hunter S. Thompson. Straight Arrow Books, \$7.95.

■ It is not easy to pay attention to the methods used by campaign-trailers, their political opinions are so much in the way. Reviewers of the flood of books on the 1972 race have for the most part lined up like voters at the polls: X is good because he unmasks Nixon, Y is good because he unmasks McGovern, Z is bad because he doesn't unmask anybody. These days *The Making of the President 1972* is of course damned, because Theodore White comes too close to accepting President Nixon's view of himself. But if it had come out in early April it would have been more generally praised. Hunter Thompson (*Doctor Thompson to you*), with his *Fear and Loathing*, has aroused even

more partisan comment: if you hate President Nixon and the American establishment generally, Thompson is good; if not, he's unbelievably bad.

Well, I voted against Mr. Nixon in 1972, in fear and loathing, and my political sympathies are thus about as far as possible from White's. Moreover, Thompson's political views, in so far as he can be said to have anything as coherent as a view, seem to me even sillier than White's. But I'd like to hold these political judgments to one side, if possible, in order to take a brief look at the methods practiced by the two journalists.

They could hardly have more divergent views of their task and their art. Hunter Thompson, touted as the "Dean of Gonzo journalism," the supreme practitioner of the "new journalism," says that there is no such thing as objective journalism, that "the phrase itself is a pompous contradiction in terms" (p. 48). It is true that he claims to "record the reality of an incredibly volatile presidential campaign while it was happening" (p. 20), but his reality is openly—one might say deliberately—biased. "Combining aggressive ignorance with a natural instinct to mock the conventional wis-

Wayne C. Booth, a professor of English and former dean of the college of the University of Chicago, is the author of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*.

dom," he would give us a "high-speed cinematic reel-record of what the campaign was like *at the time*, not what the whole thing boiled down to or how it fits into history" (pp. 20-21).

White's effort, in contrast, is precisely to show how the whole thing fits into history, and he works hard to show himself as freed of the subjective distortions of the moment. From the portentous prologue, which attempts to place the election in history, as an event coming at "The End of the Post-war World" to the embarrassed, Watergate-haunted conclusion, "Temptation of Power," White tries with mixed success to see everything in a context larger than his own feelings at any moment would provide.

Thus the thesis of *Making* is historical: Mr. Nixon was elected because the people, caught in the pendulum swings of history, had decided to "go slow," to reverse the direction of increased federal power applied to "good works." "We live . . . at the end of a generation, when the ideas of hope and grandeur that moved the decades of the 1930's and 1940's, having achieved their triumphs, imprisoned new thinking. . . . The extrapolation of those ideas by George McGovern frightened too many Americans; too many had been hurt along that road." The thesis of *Loathing* is that Hunter Thompson is interesting—or perhaps, to give him the benefit of the doubt, that McGovern could have won if he had followed Thompson's natural, sincere, unflinching populist instincts.

There are many other differences that would seem to rule out apt comparison. White's subject is how and why Nixon won. Thompson's is how McGovern won and then lost. White's implied audience is the general literate public, or those in it who seek to understand the political process. Thompson's is (or was—he claims not to have revised his original pieces for *Rolling Stone*) the system-loathers who scorn established politics. Their styles differ even more than the differences in audience would seem to dictate. Perhaps this is because each author addresses the least literate and most credulous member of his chosen kind. (Can such extremes meet? Is there some reader somewhere who will like both of these books?)

The prevailing style in *Loathing* is tough-guy gush. Thompson boasts of "saying anything that

came into my head," with the "shits" and "fucks," the libelous epithets, the hot-rodding, the drinking, the speed, the smack, all in a rush to tell us that this "new" journalist is—despite his balding pate—still the hottest thing coming down the pike. The style derives what liveliness it has mainly from a slashing contempt for every institution and almost every person—except of course those few who have kept themselves pure. It is a style that treats all politics as wicked, that honors only what is personal, anti-institutional, free, and spontaneous. Here's an average bit that concludes Chapter II:

In other words, the weight of the evidence filtering down from the high brain-rooms of both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* seems to say we're all fucked. Muskie is a bone-head who steals his best lines from old Nixon speeches. McGovern is doomed because everybody who knows him has so much respect for the man that they can't bring themselves to degrade the poor bastard by making him run for President. . . . John Lindsay is a dunce, Gene McCarthy is crazy, Humphrey is doomed and useless, Jackson should have stayed in bed . . . and, well, that just about wraps up the trip, right?

Not entirely, but I feel The Fear coming on, and the only cure for that is to chew up a fat black wad of blood-opium about the size of a young meatball and then call a cab for a fast run down to that strip of X-film houses on 14th Street . . . peel back the brain, let the opium take hold, and get locked into serious pornography . . . (p. 57).

Sometimes Thompson is better than this. At his best, he can cover a lot of ground fast, and he can be both vivid and very funny. But spontaneity is perhaps the hardest of all stylistic effects to maintain. At his worst, Thompson reads like a bad parody of himself, the clichés worn out by the effort to look brand new.

White's style, in contrast, is mandarin, a deliberately solemn intoning that implies heroic victories and defeats. It is full of "unmistakable marks" and "surest grasps," of "time frames" and "forces of circumstance," of "relentless pressures" and "brutal realities." It is not just heavy and polite (after reading Thompson's open scatology, one is amused to see White write of "t-ts"). It is mock-Olympian, laden with every portentous cliché that could possibly help make Nixon's victory seem epoch-making.

But in spite of these discouragements to comparison, both authors offer, finally, a journalism that aspires to the condition of history. They both claim to give us the 1972 election as it happened, and they thus both ask to be judged by whatever standards we have for truth in such matters.

I'm not quite sure why both authors fail so badly. Each seems to say to us that he gave all he had. Thompson makes this claim direct: he moved right up to "the Edge" of breakdown, experienced a most "tremendous High," is now tempted, by this ultimate experience, to return to politics, perhaps even to run for president. White convinces us of his seriousness with less direct evidence: the sheer mass of detail, the careful qualifications, the effort to accommodate, seemingly at the last minute, the painful developments of Watergate. They both would thus have us believe that they tried hard, White to satisfy the journalists' five W's, Thompson to achieve a new journalism built on contempt for them (at one point he playfully pretends to have forgotten one of them, "When," as part of his running attack on "classic journalism.")

My low grades to both authors are based not on the five W's (where White by comparison gets all A's) nor even on the feeling-test appealed to by the "new journalism" (White, F; Thompson, B-) but on a small number of *how* questions that we ought to be able to put to any serious journalist.

1. *How clear is his account, especially his treatment of causes? Making, B+; Loathing, F.*

The cinema verité techniques of Thompson claim to give the feelings hot off the psyche and the meanings hot off the tapes. But direct transcriptions, whether of daydreams or conversations, do not yield meanings until a mind works them over and generates relationships. White is far superior on *how it happened* because he has been willing and able to reflect and revise. A good illustration is his report on the vote in Miami on the South Carolina delegation, as a step toward the vote on the California delegation. While Thompson takes about 25 pages to give us his "bedrock truths" about the maneuvering, mostly in the form of a taped post-mortem by McGovern staffers, White covers the same ground in less than a third the space and with twice the clarity. Thompson's

taped conversation is in itself fascinating, and to *get* the tape was no doubt a kind of journalistic coup (at least one of the staffers did not know he was being taped!). But the tape is fully intelligible only after one has read *White's* effort to relate the episode to the new convention rules and to what had happened in Chicago. White's account would be more vivid if he had had the tape, but Thompson's is just not clear enough.

The truth is that Thompson is so hostile to politicians that he just cannot bother to understand them. His proud ignorance runs much deeper than he suspects, leaving him and us in a mindless,

Thompson: 'feelings hot off the psyche'

desperate present in which everything happens for the first time. (Should I be ashamed to mention other less important kinds of ignorance? Someone should tell him that "neo-" does not mean "pseudo-" and that candidates in a close race do not run "neck in neck.") His operating in an intellectual vacuum is a pity, because he does have a great nose for foul smells, and he seems to have had an instinct for how the voters were likely to go. But he hasn't a clue about why the contemptible and ridiculous shenanigans he reports could produce the results they do. Having invented a cast of characters who are almost all fools or knaves, with only one or two failed-heroes, he can write nothing but melodrama, not history, and what he writes is not even clear as drama.

On the other hand, White fumbles because he does not fully understand the effects of his biases. He tries to be faithful to the facts, but he doesn't see how much more critical he is of sources that question his theses than he is of sources that support them. A good example of how he treats the President and his critics comes in the account of the mining of Haiphong harbor. Mr. Nixon's words are accepted pretty much at face value; he is portrayed as a hero saving a nation from "surrender." His opponents are quoted only in snatches

of angry comment, with none of their reasons clearly presented. Since Mr. Nixon "won," both at home "with American opinion Out There," and internationally, he was of course right all along to choose "killing" rather than "surrendering." "The mining of Haiphong had been the biggest gamble of all Mr. Nixon's diplomacy, and with its successful execution, the grand theme of war and peace was safe" (p. 237).

It is not surprising that a mind that could simply forget to record why so many "opinion makers" were against the mining could also dismiss the importance of Watergate until the President himself had to admit that something was seriously wrong. Having started out to write a book saying that a great president rightly won his second term in this election, White was then forced by events to revise his meaning to something like this: "a highly flawed president who had done great things won the election." But was it right that he did? Well, yes and no. I'm not quite clear about that, but I *would* have been clear if only my book had come out before March 17, 1973.

2. *How does he know what he says?*—another way of asking whether he gives me grounds for believing him. *Making, A; Loathing, F.*

The only reason Thompson gives us to believe what he says is what we professors of rhetoric call his ethos; he works very hard to establish his character as the main proof of what he has to say. But shit, man, his ethos ain't no fuckin' good. He again and again shows that he shares the conviction of more than a few traditional journalists that to be entertaining is more important than to tell what happened. The "new journalism" is thus, in his hands, a form of fiction: "Fear and Loathing, or how Sir Gawain observed the White Knight's armor slowly tarnish before his pure yet troubled gaze." I will believe nothing Thompson tells me, unless I have corroboration.

Since he tells me of many times when he has gleefully lied and watched his auditors squirm under his deceptions, I must stand back a bit and doubt even his deepest claim of all: to tell his feelings as he felt them. Did he really get drunk, in despair, when he says he did? Did he really take all those drugs? Did he really almost crack up? Did he really

crash the Nixon Youth demonstration and carry a Nixon sign? Is Humphrey really "a shallow, contemptible and hopelessly dishonest old hack"? Did Muskie really get hooked on Ibogaine? Is there really such a drug? (Yes—but I had to look it up!) Did Thompson really have a long private talk with President Nixon about football, a talk that Mr. Nixon enjoyed?

No doubt a great deal of what he reports occurred, but his journalistic art, with all its boasting about honesty, is incapable of convincing us about it. He claims, for example, to reprint his original dispatches, unrevised, as they came hot off his typewriter. Should I believe him? Well, here's one thing we can easily check. I locate my personal copy of *Rolling Stone* for February 3, 1972, and before I get bored and quit checking I discover 21 changes he's made in this one installment, not counting corrected typos.

Most of the changes are trivial, sure enough: changed punctuation; elimination of puzzling words like "now" in the reference to Eugene McCarthy's "now kinky instinct for timing"; changed tenses. Some are puzzling, like cutting "goddamn" from an imaginary dialogue, or the addition of the parenthetical portion of the following: "Later . . . I half expected McCarthy to quit the race himself, rather than suffer all the way to Chicago (like Castro in Cuba—after Batista fled)." Why does his flight to San Francisco with Edward Bennett Williams begin in Dallas in *Rolling Stone*, but in Washington in *Loathing*? Why all the changes in football teams on page 53?

Some changes are not beyond conjecture if we suppose that Thompson is tempted, like the next man, to make himself seem at least slightly more prescient than he was at the time. In February, *Rolling Stone* had, "There is probably a lot of interesting talk going down around Humphrey headquarters these days." *Loathing* prefaces this with, "Another nightmare we might as well start coming to grips with is the probability that Hubert Humphrey will be a candidate for the Democratic nomination this year." What belated foresight—but perhaps this was in the original draft and was cut by the editors of *Rolling Stone*. Well, did they change the number of voters in the following sentence? "And how many more of these stinking, double-

downer sideshows will we have to go through before we can get ourselves straight enough to put together some kind of national election that will give me and the 40 million I tend to agree with a chance to vote for something . . . ?" It's "40 million" in *Rolling Stone*, but *Loathing* changes it to "at least 20 million." Did Thompson decide, in 1973, that 20 million was perhaps a more reasonable figure, thinking back to the size of McGovern's vote? Nothing important here of course, unless it is important to be able to believe what an author says. But if the original dispatches were changed as much as this, why not more? And why

'White's narrative gifts are scarcely inspiring'

claim to have changed nothing, "rejecting the luxury of hindsight"? (p. 20)

Making, in contrast, gives me good reasons to believe. Though it contains even more political speculation than *Loathing*, some of it disguised as straight reporting, White seldom fails to convince me that he has really labored in search of facts. If *Making* tells me, citing the Census, that the population of the U.S. had grown by 24 million between 1960 and 1970, I take it as an accurate report; if *Loathing* tells me things like "the gossip in the press room was heavier than usual that night: Gary Hart was about to be fired as McGovern's campaign manager . . . Humphrey's sister had just been arrested . . ." I withhold credence until I can check some other source. A strange effect, really, considering how much time Thompson spends talking up his own integrity in contrast to all those wicked politicians and hypocritical, toadying journalists.

3. Does he provide a plausible or persuasive answer to the question, "How did it happen that Richard Nixon was elected in 1972?" *Making*, B-; *Loathing*, F.

Here we arrive at the most shocking failure of Thompson. A campaign takes place as a series of

events in time, and its truths can thus only be fully realized in narrative form (see J. H. Hexter, "The Rhetoric of History," in *Doing History*). In theory, the drama of a campaign thus ought to yield itself best to the narrative freedom Thompson adopts. White's narrative gifts are scarcely inspiring, and it should not have been hard for someone competing with him, as Thompson is conscious of doing (see his quote on the dust jacket) to win hands down. Thompson rightly chooses the inverted and more dramatic form of the question: "How did it happen that McGovern won the nomination and then *lost* the election?" But his answers are whimsical and his drama perfunctory or irrelevant; we learn more, for example, about how Thompson accidentally (and hilariously) disrupted Muskie's train in Florida than we do about either Nixon's or McGovern's policies or actions.

The omission, like others in *Loathing*, would scarcely be worth mentioning if Thompson simply offered us a collection of his personal essays without pretending to take on the whole journalistic establishment. But his steady polemic against "classic journalism" demands that we compare, and when we compare we find that even in this matter of "how it happened," where his lively narrative gift ought to have come into its own, he lets us down miserably.

4. Does he provide a plausible answer to the question, "How was it on the campaign trail in 1972?" *Making*, C; *Loathing*, B-.

Since this is really Thompson's main question, and only a secondary question for White, it is surprising that *Loathing*, with all the resources and freedoms of the "new journalism," does so poorly. Still, he wins here, largely because White lets himself fall so often into the false epic. You would never guess, reading White, that anything funny happened to any candidate or reporter. Thompson is much better at catching the ridiculous side—Chris Hart, a Muskie campaign manager, reporting instructions "that the Senator should never again be put in a situation where he has to think quickly"; a photograph of Humphrey standing in front of the flag, shaking his fist self-righteously, with the marvelous caption "I was once a Jew my-

self." Thompson has a good eye and ear for the pomposities that White accepts uncritically. In fact his entire capital as a journalist can almost be reduced to his boast that he alone of national journalists adopted a "merciless, ball-busting approach." When you set out to bust balls you give up more than Thompson realizes, but you do gain—not only in entertainment value, because you can show the absurdities clearly, but also in showing how it really was.

I suspect that Thompson would appeal to this kind of success as an answer to my other complaints. After all, if the campaign was as absurd as his narrative shows, what could be a better embodiment of it than a self-contradictory, self-indulgent and confusing book? If intelligence and continuity are not in the reported object, surely the report should abandon them too. But this claim, called the "fallacy of imitative form" by some literary critics, is even less plausible when applied to journalism than it is when applied to novels, plays, or poems. Of course the campaign felt chaotic and mad to many participants much of the time. So did every other historical event to those taking part in it. What a reporter owes us is not a compounding of confusions, of which we always have more than enough, but a serious effort, however limited, to discern patterns. Thompson is able enough to have helped us understand the campaign; even these hurried dispatches often show promise, hinting at a book about it.

But instead of laboring to free that book, Thompson has remained satisfied with his original goals, which, at least a good deal of the time, did not go beyond entertainment. You'd think—since he is a bright youngish man—that he would make it. But when it was decided, somewhere back there, that a reporter talking about himself can be more entertaining than a reporter talking about events, somebody ought to have made it clear that it all depends on how interesting the reporter is. Far too much of *Loathing*—and it's a long book, an incredible 25,000 words longer than *Making*—consists of dodgy waffling precisely like the freshman essay every writing teacher receives at least once a year: "Sitting in front of my blank page at 2:30 a.m., with the paper due tomorrow, I am desperate. But suddenly I have an idea. I'll write about how it

feels to be sitting in front of my blank page . . ." Here's Thompson: "This is about the thirteenth lead I've written for this goddam mess, and they are getting progressively worse . . . which hardly matters now, because we are down to the deadline again . . . and those thugs out in San Francisco will be screaming for Copy. Words! Wisdom! Gibberish! Anything! The presses roll at noon. . . . This room reeks of failure once again . . ." Such stuff fills about a third of the more than 500 pages, and it is climaxed by a taped interview with the author, performed (maybe) by the editor (75 rambling pages!); Thompson was so freaked out he just couldn't write any more, and it had to be taped-talk or nothing.

It is simply baffling to me that the trivial (though often amusing) results should be hailed by other journalists as "the country's greatest political reporting," as "the best stuff on the campaign I've read anywhere," and as "the best book about the campaign" (the last from Garry Wills in *The New York Review of Books*).

Well, maybe it's not really intended as very high praise. Maybe American journalism can escape the dullness and pomposity and solemnity of White only by seeking pop frenzies. I'm not entirely sorry that we have Thompson's report on how he felt. But let's see it for what it is: an inflated footnote on how he used the campaign to achieve a "very special kind of High," an Entertainment for those who want to see politics as a silly game that could be dispensed with if only people-who-feel-right would get together. Cleverness, energy and brashness cannot, finally, make up for ignorance and lack of critical training.

A mature journalism, in contrast, would have to do better than White does with my four "H's": How clear is he? How does he know? How did it all happen? And how was it—or how did it feel? This *Making* disappoints so deeply that one wants to return to the earlier ones for reappraisal: did they only seem better because we shared their opinions more closely? Still, it passes the only final test that could justify any long-book on its subject: no historian of politics in 1972 will be able to ignore it. If Thompson enters future histories, it will be as an example of intellectual decline and fall.

Pittsburgh's great beef sale

Let the buyer—and the journalist—beware.

ROY HARRIS

■ No matter how you adjusted your color TV sets it was still a red-faced John Chancellor who read this brief report on the Thursday NBC *Nightly News* program last Sept. 20:

"Earlier this week a butcher in Pittsburgh sold nearly 50,000 pounds of beef at bargain prices. He got a lot of publicity and the beef sold out in two days. Now it turns out that the butcher bought this beef after a supermarket chain rejected it because of a refrigeration failure during shipment. Government inspectors said the beef was okay. But the butcher failed to tell his customers that the meat came from a salvage sale."

Thus, NBC joined the parade of news outlets trying to correct stories run the preceding Monday and Tuesday—stories touting a sale at Pittsburgh's New Diamond Market of "top choice" meat at "1945 prices," with precious little scepticism about the market owner's claims. "If we'd known it was salvage meat," says *Nightly News* editor Gilbert Millstein, "we'd never have run that story."

With all the recent bad news about meat prices, it was no surprise that editors' mouths watered at the prospect of an upbeat story on beef prices. The story was carried by both wire services, and the

New York *Times* placed it on the first page of its second section.

But, in less than a week, the New Diamond meat sale could be seen as a textbook example of how sketchy and misleading local reporting can become sketchy and misleading national reporting.

The whole thing might have been simply another obscure salvage meat sale if it hadn't been for a "tip" to Ralph Brem, managing editor of the *Pittsburgh Press*, from the Scripps-Howard paper's advertising department. The ad-men told Brem that Charles Glick at New Diamond was buying space to promote his "1945 price" gimmick. Brem passed the word to the city desk, and reporter Joe Grata was assigned to walk the three blocks to the New Diamond Market and interview Glick. Grata's *Press* story appeared on Sunday, the day before the sale started: it contained one of the most unpropaganda leads of the year: "Charley Glick plans to do something he doesn't think anyone will 'beef' about." It was placed on the front page, under a three-column spread and headlined: MOM! HERE'S BEEF AT '1945' PRICE.

Grata's story provided a forum for Glick to praise his promotion. He contended he was expecting to lose money on the sale, just to give customers "a treat." And, not only did he list 9 sample prices for the next day's special, he took the opportunity to boost his entire operation. ("Peo-

Roy Harris is a reporter assigned to the Pittsburgh bureau of the *Wall Street Journal*.

ple want the personal service we offer and not the pre-packaged meats you find in other stores.") Not surprisingly, the story brought a Monday morning mob to the New Diamond's door.

With the crowd came a raft of reporters, clutching their *Press* clipping. A UPI man failed to break through the crush of customers to talk to Glick, according to bureau chief Ed McHale. When the newsman returned, confirming that there was a massive response to the sale, UPI issued a wire story based on the *Press*' Sunday and Monday reporting. (On Monday, the *Press* ran a front page article, continued to a page adjacent to the New Diamond ad.)

The Associated Press did manage to get a reporter into the store, and produced a feature story with a number of original quotes. TV crews filmed the confusion in the market. WIIC-TV, a Cox Broadcasting station and the NBC affiliate in Pittsburgh, sent two reporters, one of them consumer affairs specialist Bev Smith. Their film, including an interview with Glick, was forwarded to the network's *Nightly News*.

Tuesday morning's Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette*, the *Press*' only daily competition, carried its first mention of the sale in a prominently displayed feature by Alvin Rosensweet. That morning, the New York *Times* ran essentially the same article and photograph. Rosensweet serves as a *Times* stringer, and the story appeared as a "Special to the *Times*."

Meanwhile, newspapers and TV stations began receiving anonymous calls suggesting that Glick's meat had previously been rejected by the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co. and other chains; some calls suggested the beef was spoiled. When *Press* reporter Grata made a quick check of these reports, he was assured by a packing company official that it was good meat, scrutinized by federal inspectors.

But on Wednesday, Geoffrey Tomb of the *Post-Gazette* and another reporter took the allegations directly to Glick. Without hesitation, Glick explained that his shipment had been purchased as salvage from the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad after being refused by A&P. The reason for A&P's refusal: a refrigeration failure in transit.

Glick was asked why he didn't tell the *Press* about the special circumstances surrounding the shipment. "Nobody asked me," he responded, add-

ing that he felt the meat was in excellent shape and didn't need any apologies. Salvage sales aren't unusual, he said. He felt the only odd thing in this case was that an independent meat retailer, not a big chain, had finally purchased the discount shipment. He still claimed to have lost \$3,000 to \$5,000 on the sale, although the meat had come to him at bargain prices. The publicity, he acknowledges, was worth "millions."

The Thursday *Post-Gazette* story was the first clearly negative publicity about the sale. It began: "A failure in a refrigeration unit played an essential part in the New Diamond Market's decision this week to sell beef at 1945 prices." In the fifth paragraph, the story assured readers that the meat wasn't spoiled. The article, which ran under a three-column headline on the front page, used "industry sources" to suggest Glick might have profited from the sale, despite his claimed sacrifice.

Suddenly, there was a new front-page beef story that caused a scramble to catch up by wire services, broadcast outlets—and the Pittsburgh *Press*. Glick made it easier this time, issuing a formal statement in which he accused competitors of "showing a jealous bone" by "calling 'foul'" to the media.

Several reporters and editors emphasized in these stories—which ran four days after initial reports—that the meat was "perfectly good" and "untainted." They did not ask whether their original reporting had been as pure.

No clarification appeared in the New York *Times*. Robert Semple of the national desk says a wire service item was marked for publication, but didn't make the paper on Friday, or subsequently.

Some corrected stories were almost as embarrassing as the misleading first reports, however. WIIC-TV's Bev Smith, for example, did a follow-up story as her "Consumer Report" on the local news following John Chancellor's correction. She told her viewers Chancellor didn't "tell the whole story." Her report continued: "The meat sold was purchased from refrigerated cars that had dropped below normal accepted temperatures." (She meant that the temperature in the car had risen above normal.) "The question in everyone's mind—is the meat safe?" Miss Smith asked. And then she presented an interview with—who else?—Charles Glick, assuring everyone that the beef was fine.

Journalists and the public, concerned about the credibility of reports that emerge from places such as Pittsburgh, might well ask if such coverage can be avoided in the future. Is it necessary to see two or more stories over four days to learn what is really happening?

Interviews with reporters and editors involved in the meat story indicate that, yes, such snafu's can easily recur. However, there are some safeguards that could prevent repetition.

The first safeguard, obviously, is the competition of inquisitive reporters seeking different elements of a story, instead of just trying to "catch up." The Sunday and Monday *Press* stories did not seriously question Glick's newspaper advertisement, and that set the pattern for most subsequent stories.

Press reporter Grata concedes that "it would have been better had I known" about the beef's history. Not that Glick appeared evasive; Grata doesn't recall asking about the source of the meat.

WIIC-TV's Bev Smith says: "I figured he bought the meat like anybody else. I had the impression he was just trying to sell more beef." In short, she didn't ask about the source of the meat, either. Nor did the *Post-Gazette's* Rosensweet, whose story also appeared in the *New York Times*. "Maybe I should have been more skeptical," he says now, but he doesn't believe the average reporter would ask

the source of meat as a normal question in covering such a meat sale.

Yet, largely overlooked was a Monday AP feature containing some statements that should have put the media on guard. The fifth paragraph said "the meat was from a salvage shipment but was untainted," attributing the comment to Glick. It wasn't until Thursday that this element received the treatment it deserved—in Geoffrey Tomb's *Post-Gazette* story.

Press managing editor Brem says his paper doesn't subscribe to AP. The *Post-Gazette's* Rosensweet doesn't recall reading the AP story. It isn't clear when—or even if—the AP piece was dispatched outside the state.

In some reports, including the UPI dispatch and the WIIC-TV spots, "claims of 1945 prices" simply became "1945 prices" without attribution. (Average retail meat prices as quoted for 1945 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics were far lower than those described by Glick. For example, Glick sold round steak for 99 cents per pound—still a fabulous price today—but the average price per pound recorded in the government's 1945 survey was 40.6 cents.) Reporters who did attribute the pricing claim didn't bother to check it independently, even though they knew the story was attracting national interest. (Grata says he was shown a copy of an old New Diamond Market price list to verify the claim.)

Surprisingly, few Pittsburgh journalists appeared in interviews to be upset by the misleading coverage of the New Diamond sale. (The Sunday *Press* story "was a great page-one ad," jokes Rosensweet.) But the national media who relied on the reports, such as NBC and the *New York Times*, took the matter more seriously. "It's an important thing to get before our readers the true story of what happened," says the *Times's* Semple, promising to review what happened to the Thursday wire service story that apparently never saw print. "We try to set high standards, and to admit our mistakes if we make them."

Of course, readers have learned to be skeptical of advertised "specials"—and of articles printed in food sections. Apparently—at least in some instances—consumers must also learn to be skeptical of page one.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY'S LARGEST INDEPENDENT MEAT MARKET

NEW DIAMOND MARKET

Our Daily Location... In Murphy's Bldg. Downtown Store... Fifth Ave.

We Break Beef Prices

HOW YOU CAN GET THE OLD DAYS

1945 PRICES BEEF SALE

T-Bone Sirloin Round **Steak 99¢ lb.**

Chuck Roast .69¢

Roasted Round or Sirloin Tip

Rolled Roast .99¢

Ground Meat .69¢

Fresh Brisket of Beef .99¢

Many other specials too numerous to mention. Fresh Fish & Produce too.

The ad that became news.

Folksy TV News

As local stations use outside consultants to help boost their news ratings, questions—and criticisms—arise.

EDWARD W. BARRETT

TV Station Manager: While you are criticizing our news programs, what do you say about these national trophies our news has won?

Visiting Consultant: You ought to put them in a closet. They just represent the judgment of professional peers.

That exchange, in a leading television station in a medium-sized city, pretty well epitomizes a phenomenon that has now spread across the country: the current breed of consultants moving in to reshape local television journalism in the image they say the public wants.

The phenomenon is not new. It began in 1966 when a firm named McHugh and Hoffman began advising a few midwestern stations to offer informal news presentations that others have dubbed "happy talk." What is new is a rising tide of indignation and warnings from respected news di-

rectors, some of whom are talking of a joint counter-offensive. A battle of sorts may well lie ahead.

The complaining news directors see the consultants as trivializing the news, placing "palsy-walsy" presentation above content, and leading inevitably to jazzed-up journalism. They are skeptical of the handsomely bound audience surveys that each of the three principal consulting firms employ, and they particularly suspect the recommendations that the firms say grow out of those surveys.

In countless cities the firms call for "production openings." At WPLG in Miami, for example, McHugh and Hoffman devised rapid-flash sketches of the news team followed by the old newsreel gimmick of a camera rotating toward the viewer. Magid usually calls for increasing the number of separate items and has gone so far as to recommend that 30 to 40 items be packed in the 20-odd available minutes in a Philadelphia 30-minute news program. In station after station, shots of a rather frenzied newsroom now open the shows, and palsy banter is a continuing keynote.

The three consulting firms argue that journalists' fears are groundless, that they are simply seek-

Edward W. Barrett, former dean of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, is chairman of the Review's board of advisory editors.

ing to inject "flair," "rapport" and "informality" into news programs. They question the conventional wisdom of the news fraternity, seeing too much emphasis on "what the public should have" as opposed to "what the public wants." They insist television journalism has been too addicted to "authoritarian figures" as anchormen. And they say, with considerable justification, that their consulting work is much more popular with station managers than with news directors.

The rush to outside consultants doubtless springs from the gradual discovery in the 1960's that local television news was one of the few kinds of programming (in addition to sports coverage) that local stations could do well—and the discovery that, by delivering large audiences to advertisers, local news could be highly profitable, at least in the top 50 to 100 television markets. Audience size became an ever more important criterion for news shows, and the doors were opened to consultants who promised to boost news show ratings.

Two large firms have emerged: the McHugh and Hoffman organization, now based in McLean, Va., and Frank N. Magid Associates, based in Marion, Iowa. A smaller and newer firm, based in New York, is Melvin A. Goldberg, Inc. Communications, which uses the curious acronym "MAGI/C," to the probable displeasure of the better known Magid. All three claim that audience research is the basis for their recommendations concerning news programming and packaging. Although they insist they follow no pat formulas, the broadcasts they influence seem to have common characteristics. For example, "The World Tonight" is a fairly common program title among Magid clients; "Eyewitness News" or "The Scene Tonight" among McHugh and Hoffman clients.

The consultants generally begin by selling top station management on doing a survey to find out what the audience thinks of news programs, the personalities involved, the visual setting, the seriousness of the presentation, and so on. Then the news department is converted, often reluctantly, to going along. ("After all, who can object to an audience survey?") Then come recommendations about recasting the program or programs. If management buys it, the next step is a continuing relationship in which the consultants regularly sam-

ple programs (often on tape) and offer critiques and suggestions.

Today, Frank N. Magid Associates leads the field with 84 TV and radio station clients. Magid claims research forces that are the "most complete of their kind in the world." He says he charges an average of \$18,000 to \$20,000 for the initial survey-study, and an average of \$1,500 a month thereafter. He estimates he travels some 250,000 miles a year. McHugh and Hoffman generally subcontract their audience surveys; they specialize in "analyzing the data" and advising on that basis. The firm says it now serves some 29 client stations; it declines to reveal its fees but reputedly charges a bit more than Magid. Goldberg, the relative newcomer, now serves "about ten stations" at "somewhat lower fees." He designs his own survey research, hires field-crew help, and also uses citizen panels to sample reaction to programs. Goldberg acknowledges he entered the field because in towns with three or more TV stations, Magid and McHugh can serve only one each.

It is probably significant that the key members of the consulting firms are not distinguished by their journalistic experience. Both Philip McHugh and Peter Hoffman of the McHugh and Hoffman firm came from the advertising business. McHugh, who worked for the Campbell-Ewald agency after experience in broadcast operations, has been quoted by *Variety* as saying he applies to news the same kind of research that went into the success of *Bonanza*. Frank Magid taught sociology at the University of Iowa and at Coe before going into general audience research and later into news consulting. Melvin Goldberg headed research for Westinghouse Broadcasting and the National Association of Broadcasters before he moved into TV news consulting.

The country is dotted with casualties of the consultants. The reports to client stations, particularly those of Magid, are brutal in appraising anchormen and reporters and recommending firings. And, in fact, a number of news directors seem to have moved out after consultants moved in. Ray Wilson of station KFMB in San Diego, widely considered the number one newscaster in town, is still news director but was taken off the screen after Magid went to work. Roy Heatly left KRON

in San Francisco in the wake of Magid recommendations. Tom Finn, recently dropped as anchorman on WIIC's 11 p.m. news in Pittsburgh, tends to think Magid "wanted an actor, and I'm a newsman." He thinks he has been, in effect, black-listed on other Magid stations. And there are many other news professionals who are convinced that there have been scores of other casualties.

Not all professionals are critical of the consulting firms. Mel Kampmann, news director of WPVI in Philadelphia, says: "I am high on Magid and his service. . . . It showed us the direction and what the people of Philadelphia wanted. It's very expensive, but it pays great dividends." An assistant news director at KGO in San Francisco said his organization is happy with the McHugh and Hoffman service, adding: "Remember they are just consultants. We still control our own shop."

Many news directors and newsmen are critical, but they ask not to be quoted by name about the consultants hired by their station managers. Says one: "They are not concerned about quality but about style and flash." Says another: "It's a sin to be dull; this consultant business has become a substitute for the thoughtful approach in informing a community about its problems."

One who openly states his misgivings is Ralph Renick, vice president and news director of WTVJ (Miami) and long anchorman of the most popular news program in town. Though he himself has come off rather well in Magid's critiques, Renick fears "a tendency to downplay important information in favor of soft features, visual gimmickry and personalities." He says outside criticism is healthy but warns against "consulting firms supplanting the judgment of the news director" and against "the packages of recommendations being accepted *carte blanche* by front offices over what is right in a journalistic sense."

The network reaction to the consultant approach varies markedly: ABC has used McHugh and Hoffman on local network-owned stations, and attributes some increased ratings (including those of WABC-TV in New York) to the consultants. The firm is also being used to "a degree" by the ABC network which selects from among the recommendations. President Elmer Lower of ABC News says:

Over the years, ABC News has commissioned a number of attitudinal research studies, utilizing several research companies, to learn as much as possible about the attitudes, opinions, likes, and dislikes of the news-viewing audience. Our object is to find out who watches network news broadcasts and why. . . . By evaluating the information . . . we are able to make improvements in the quality of the ABC evening news.

ABC News has been well pleased with the results of our long association with McHugh and Hoffman. We have also used Lieberman Research, Inc., and Daniel Yankelovich, Inc., with whose work we are also satisfied.

Richard Salant, president of CBS News says:

This business can get out of hand—and indeed has gotten out of hand. We can't be motivated in news just by what people want as opposed to what they need if they are to be reasonably informed. The current trend leads to an unjournalistic show-business approach in news. I really can't think of anything worse than non-journalists telling us what should be done in journalism.

NBC appears to fall in a middle ground. It is testing Magid on its radio programming, and says NBC researchers find Magid surveys sound. But NBC is cautious about accepting recommendations.

A number of ABC and NBC news officials say they think it makes sense to take the consultants' audience research seriously but to be very cautious or skeptical about adopting program suggestions. "Too many local stations," says one NBC official, "go along with the consultants on everything."

The heads of all three firms state their cases in rather plausible terms:

Philip McHugh says: "There is no formula. The idea that you can develop a formula and apply it like a rubber stamp is a ridiculous idea." He adds that "you can't pay any attention to the top 3% [of the audience] since they get their news from other sources" like the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. "They say if the symphony was on, they would watch it, but chances are they wouldn't. . . . Many newsrooms show more *New York Times* type influence—and they have lost touch with the audience."

Although McHugh talks a lot about unique answers for each station, he seems to think that all news should be "humanized" on all stations. "The

audience has to be treated like human beings," he says. "There has to be emphasis on human interest and human beings. You have to have an anchorman who can establish a rapport with the audience. The anchorman is someone who is asking the audience to invite him into their homes at the same time night after night. It takes a very special kind of personality." McHugh likens the anchorman to someone who has to tell the mother about a death in the family. "The anchorman is in that position with someone in the audience every night."

Although McHugh also stresses his role as a consultant, not a manager, he commented that, after his firm makes recommendations, "we continue to harass the stations."

Melvin Goldberg thinks the old-time professional journalists tend to be "out of touch" with their audience and market. "People say they want to watch *Meet the Press*, but when it comes on, they don't watch it," he says.

"I view the writing as more important than the visual gimmicks and place a lot of emphasis on writing style. . . . You have to find a way to make cost-of-living figures clear. Better than a chart is a supermarket picture with the groceries you can buy this year as opposed to last."

Goldberg appeared somewhat less elaborately confident than the others interviewed for this article. He conceded that surveys and panels leave

many questions unanswered. "You have to use trial and error to find out what's wrong. Nobody is God. Nobody has all the answers."

Frank Magid, despite his academic beginnings, is regarded as the super-salesman in the field. Carefully groomed and highly articulate, he exudes confidence.

"We look at every station individually," Magid says. "We do not provide a formula. We have been accused of trying to put show business into the presentation of news, but when I ask these people, where is it chipped in stone that the news should be presented the way you say it should be presented, they can't answer me."

"There are too many people who work under the false assumption that they know what the public *should* have. We have ways to determine what the public actually wants." News directors, he says, "should be open-minded about what the public really wants and how the public wants it presented. Unfortunately, some people feel hard news and the weather and sports should be the only things that make up news. We don't agree with that. News should be presented in a more interesting way and a more palatable way."

"News should be more than the police blotter and the wire services. It should find out the problems that exist in the community and what can be done. They should not just look for dirt, they should also look for the good things."

"Many stations are just presenting a newspaper of the air," he complains. "What they are not doing is involving a person as he should be involved."

An example of this kind of reporting, Magid says, was provided recently on a Cleveland news broadcast where viewers were taken, by camera, on the route a killer followed as he approached his victim, instead of just having a shot of where the murder occurred. "It was as if you were really there," Magid says, as if added suspense in a TV news murder story is a major achievement.

Each of the consulting firms cites success stories in which the ratings of client-stations have increased. Prospective clients hear nothing of cases where ratings failed to do so.

Many a question has been raised about the consultants' use of surveys and their oft-proclaimed reliance on "social science." One thing is clear:

Hire One, Help Two

The TV news consultants are developing techniques for serving two clients by finagling one shift in personnel.

The system works this way: in consulting for client station XXX, Magid, for example, notes that the opposition station has a popular newscaster. Later, while advising station YYY in another town, the consultant urges the hiring of that newscaster. Presto! Client YYY gains an appealing newscaster and client XXX gains in ratings because its opposition has lost a mainstay.

EWB

when the claim is made that "our survey indicates," the typical news director finds himself ill-equipped to answer. Yet the consultants seem to span a great deal of territory in moving from actual survey findings to their recommendations of news-presentation techniques, use of film, chit-chat among the broadcasters, and other "informal interplay."

In reviewing Magid survey materials and then Magid recommendations, for example, this writer could find little "social science" underpinning some of the proposals. Behind many of the recommendations seemed to lie, rather, a general quest for informality, light-hearted banter, simplifications, and a not-too-serious approach.

The research itself has been questioned. For example, David J. LeRoy, director of the Communication Research Center at Florida State University, criticized some of the research methodology and the long leap from survey findings to recommendations in a public panel discussion with McHugh. In analyzing one Magid audience survey, he questioned the size of the sample and particularly of the sub-samples, the "biased tone" of the language, inconsistency in tabulations, and other elements. His critique buttressed a suspicion that many or most of the consultants' recommendations would have been the same had there been no survey.

Amid all the claims, critiques, and counter-claims, these observations seem justified:

- The quality of countless local news broadcasts has assuredly left the way open for improvement—and made it easy for outside consultants to make them more appealing. A few shows have been professional and informative. Many more have been stilted, disjointed, given to cliché film clips of fires and official handshakes, and generally amateurish.

- Through their written critiques and discussions with client stations, the consultants have undoubtedly improved the flow, the smoothness, the pace, and the general appeal of many local productions. Audience surveys have doubtless helped them to identify those newsmen who have—or

don't have—the intangible qualities that affect audience appeal.

- At the same time, many of the recommendations add up to a general emphasis on show-business techniques and a hint of meretriciousness. The largest of the consulting firms, Magid, has called for projecting "comradery," simplifying and limiting treatment of complex news, and elimination of "upper-class" English, to cite only a few examples.

- Although the consultants generally claim they emphasize presentation and not content, one effect is that of curtailing the significant and increasing the light features and the trivial.

- There is certainly room for surveys to sample audience reactions to news programs and personalities—provided the surveys are methodologically sound and not over-interpreted, and provided they are not adopted as the sole criteria for news programming. However, it is doubtful that audience research should be designed and interpreted by those who are selling continuing advice—particularly if the advice tends to follow set patterns. Detachment is an indispensable ingredient of sound research.

- Outside critiques by individuals or groups with a broad view of news programming should be welcomed and weighed. Nor need all of these critiques be done by news professionals, for the conventional wisdom of the journalistic fraternity is not infallible.

- The times and the trends may well call for creation of an organization that will advise on news programming not just from the standpoint of entertainment and audience appeal, but with consideration of the essential and interesting information presented to the public in an appealing and professional format.

- Those station managements with a sense of community service might do well to consider whether "popularity" and audience size should be the main standards applied to news programming and news content. After all, if newspapers followed these standards, they might well end up with front pages devoted only to sports, sex and comic strips.

Meanwhile, in Toronto . . .

Some local TV news programs are growing longer, and more detailed

The trouble with news on commercial television is that it's too commercial. For every few minutes of news, there's another commercial. And, just to make sure you stay glued to the set for the next commercial, a couple of pleasant fellows joke around to soften you up for the real news, which is that New Yummies come coated with freeze-dried caviar or that Panda gasoline has a special additive that emits a whimper when you're about to run out of gas.

Well, what else can you expect? The business goal of U.S. television is selling large volumes of advertising. Most television programming is therefore designed to capture massive audiences. Most TV news has been only a little different because its producers have had conflicting goals—to attract a large audience, but also to inform it.

As Richard Wald, president of NBC News, put it, "There may be a sizable—and valuable—part of the TV audience that is interested in news, but they [sic] are of course outmassed by the people who look for entertainment."

One result is that the news is not as large a part of a TV news program as many think it should be. Walter Cronkite once told a conference of news directors what he would do with more airtime:

"Expansion of present time allotments would help us to improve our product by a quantum jump. If we had twice the time we now have on the evening news, we could cover a few more items than we do now, but primarily we would give slightly more length to the stories we present now: a single added fact, a single additional quote almost certainly would improve the perspective of the story and might, indeed, provide just a bit more of that precious commodity, balance. . . ."

In television terms, the audience for news—even Walter Cronkite news—is small: less than a fourth of the audience that watches *Lucy*. But such small audiences are the lifeblood of some urban stations, that operate on "ultra high frequencies" (the UHF channels are 14 through 69). Many have discovered that people will turn to them if they are the only station in town with Spanish, Lithuanian, or other specialty programming. Unhappily, most have yet to discover the hungry minority that craves the in-

telligent presentation of television news.

There have been at least two exceptions to this broadcast blindness. KMEX-TV in Los Angeles recently programmed an English language news service during its previously dark eight-and-a-half hours. Between 6:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. KMEX broadcast a live (anchormen, not ticker tape) news program on channel 34, employing a news staff of 20. This experiment was a step forward for people who can absorb the world's news in the morning and early afternoon, but Los Angeles TV viewers who tuned to channel 34 during the evening were out of luck—unless they wanted Spanish entertainment.

However, there is a TV station that broadcasts two-and-a-half hours of news five nights each week. It's in Toronto, Canada. The operation at CITY-TV is unique in North American electronic journalism.

Most TV newsrooms rely heavily on daily newspapers to select their stories for the evening news. CITY editors also check the papers every day, but only to decide what the papers omitted. One night, for example, an Ontario labor official responded on CITY to an employer's call for wage-price controls. Toronto's printed press had put the executive's suggestion on the front pages, ignoring labor's response.

The show is loose and informal, but not oozing in artificial quips. When a live interview becomes more interesting than expected, few rigid scheduling rules force its premature termination.

The flexibility is not sloppiness; experienced newsmen are in charge. To expose a college term-paper salesman, CITY invited him to explain his service on the air. When his long list of excuses, rationalizations, and protestations were exhausted, a reporter appeared with two of the salesman's "original" essays. They had been copied *verbatim* from books. One reporter had sold the two book excerpts to the term-paper salesman; another purchased them a few days later. When the second reporter called the service to ask if it was OK to submit the papers as original work, the service had assured him that it was. This conversation was taped and, at this point in the interview, played on the air.

In all, the exposure of a term-paper salesman took half an hour. Live.

Many CITY news items are 10 or 15 minutes long. (Generally, 30-minute segments rarely have more than five stories; often they have only two.) Reporters can take the time they need to explain such complicated topics as city hall politics and land development (two frequent topics on CITY).

They are also encouraged to analyze, make informed predictions, and offer their own opinions. Even politicians are given the time they need to expand facile answers—and perhaps to drown themselves in their own contradictory rhetoric.

When stewardesses struck a family-owned Canadian airline, CITY explained the issues by splicing together the opposing positions of the family patriarch and labor, issue by issue. That was followed by a discussion of the adequacy of the training given stewardesses in emergency procedures. This story was given 16 minutes—more time than the typical Chicago network-owned station gives to all the news in its 10 p.m. wrap-up.

Although CITY news is chock full of information, it is not limited to hard news. It includes 15 minutes of sports commentary (not just the scores), a half hour of reviews of theater and other cultural events, letters to the editors (including crazies like those who want to accept pollution as the social cost of keeping industry from fleeing to Africa), and a popular 30-minute program of business news.

Although the business segment is billed as the only one of its kind in Toronto that gives the businessman's point of view, recent items on new cars, privacy ("a relic of the past"), and supermarket profiteering also have a broader appeal. The segment even includes job offerings.

CITY's technical set-up is as unusual as its news operation. It broadcasts its diverse program content on an unpopulated and technically difficult part of the frequency spectrum, channel 79. (CITY is the first commercial station in Canada on the UHF band, which in Canada reaches to channel 83.) It does so with a piddling amount of power, 36,000 watts. (This is scheduled to be increased, but it won't approach stations such as WABC-TV in New York, which uses 110,000 watts.) And in Canada, where few sets can receive UHF, CITY gets most of its viewers in an unusual way, via the 17 cable television systems in the metropolitan Toronto area. Not everybody in the area subscribes to the cable in Toronto, so only about half the viewers even have access to CITY, and its news ratings seldom exceed 1½% on any given evening.

Instead of film cameras and giant mobile broadcast units, CITY relies primarily on portable, half-inch video tape recorders. This equipment is so light, easy to carry and simple enough to operate that a reporter can also operate the camera if need be. CITY's usual camera crew includes one person in addition to the reporter, instead of the usual two or three. The footage from six such crews is instantly ready for viewing by the news staff. (CITY also has a two-camera mobile van, but it rarely leaves Toronto's city hall.) CITY tapes are black and white and often grainy, but their content more than offsets their lack of technical quality.

CITY speed pays off in the coverage of breaking

events such as the 1972 elections. In 20 minutes station producers inserted 18 taped segments shot by reporters carrying hand-held cameras. Other stations had to rely on cumbersome and expensive microwave links to each election headquarters.

CITY news can employ an incredibly high total of 25 reporters, cameramen, and researchers because it is run on a shoestring. Salaries are low (reporters are willing to work for an average of \$10,000 because of the freedom they get at CITY) and half-inch video tape is both cheap (less than 50 cents a minute) and reusable. Many people (including the business segment's knowledgeable anchorman) are part-timers. The show uses only two manned studio cameras (it has a third unmanned camera that just sits there; it's used for slides or wide set shots). The entire news block—which runs from 9:30 p.m. to midnight—is taped and replayed the following morning. CITY spends a total of \$600,000 per year on news, a fraction of the amount others spend for two or three chunks of nightly half-hour "happy talk."

The station is dedicated to continuing its shoestring budget. "We have to stay small to remain free to do this kind of programming," says Phyllis Switzer, one of the founders. "We even encourage viewers to change channels" if they prefer other programming, she says.

A prime-time minute of advertising on CITY goes for as little as \$500 (\$60 to \$100 on the news), compared to the rate charged by CFTO, Channel 9 in Toronto, of \$920 per prime-time minute. CITY can afford that immense gap because it took only \$3 million to capitalize CITY. CFTO, by contrast, soaked up \$12 million in getting started.

Perhaps the most important ingredient in CITY's success as a news medium is its dedication to provide an alternative and its willingness, despite its commercial structure, to give up big-city broadcasting's traditional 40 per cent pre-tax profit on annual sales. This, in effect, means that CITY is organized to plow some of its profits into the community it is licensed to serve.

It serves up 12½ hours a week of evening news on a \$2.8 million annual station budget. The station, launched in 1973, now projects a profit by 1974, eight months ahead of schedule. How does CITY do it? By supporting the news with profitable syndicated material (mostly from the U.S.) and a Friday night "blue movie," which, understandably, is tops in its time slot.

CITY news is amateurishly produced at times, but it is responsible, exciting, and informative. One letter-writer to the *Toronto Star* called CITY "the first TV station that respects the intelligence and maturity of its viewers." If the ratings service are any guide, up to 25,000 people per night agree.

JERROLD OPPENHEIM

Jerrold Oppenheim is a Chicago lawyer and editor of *Cable Report*, a monthly newsletter about cable television.

All that slithers is not news.

The 'deadly, Egyptian cobra' in Buffalo Grove

RON POWERS

■ For four slithering days and three wiggly-squiggly nights last August, the Saga of Seymour, The Deadly Egyptian Cobra That Almost Bit Buffalo Grove, played to capacity crowds in the Chicago news media. Whether Seymour was a real cobra or but a cobra of the mind, captured by the media to fill a gaping summer news hole, remains an unanswered question.

The fact is that the escaped snake, whether poisonous or harmless, touched off an old-fashioned cobra hoedown among Chicago editors, reporters and news announcers. Not since the DE MAU MAU MURDER CONSPIRACY RING had there been such a high-spirited outpouring of scare headlines, nervous gossip reported as news, broadcast "actuality" from verbally embarrassed police captains, scurrying cameramen and authoritative "background stories" designed to illuminate a phantom story.

Touching off this hysteria was a telephone call made on August 26, at 3:22 p.m., to the Buffalo

Grove police department by an 18-year-old man named David Pearson, who reported the escape of what he believed to be a poisonous snake—named Seymour—from a glass cage in his garage.

The Saturday telephone call created the joyous revival-meeting atmosphere that an exotic (and politically neutral) crisis always inspires among newsmen: feature writers hauled out their Sunday-best alliteration ("Seymour . . . successfully eluded searchers Sunday," hissed the Chicago *Sun-Times*). Headline writers pitched in with hyperbolic visions of fork-tongued apocalypse ("TERROR HIDING IN 'COBRA GROVE,'" trilled Chicago *Today*). Photographers raced to Lincoln Park Zoo to snap pictures of captive hooded cobras for front-page display, pushing aside for a day or two the usual skirt shots of secretaries "enjoying the warm August sun." Copy editors virtually welded the adjective "deadly" to the noun "cobra," establishing a hybrid phrase almost as inevitable as the "wily Ho Chi Minh" of a few years back.

Television stations sent camera crews speeding to Buffalo Grove—a quiet, middle-class suburb 32 miles from the Chicago Loop—to obtain vital film

Ron Powers is the Pulitzer Prize-winning radio-TV critic of the Chicago *Sun-Times*.

footage of police wearing rubber boots, poking warily around. Radio stations enjoyed their biggest scare since Orson Welles broadcast that the Martians had invaded the Earth.

"The snake is highly poisonous," warned an excited newscaster for rock station WCFL—taking for granted, as did everyone else, that the snake was a cobra and therefore highly poisonous. Helpfully, he added: "The snake is able to strike at a victim from ten feet away . . . and moves for short distances at a speed of thirty-five miles an hour!"

Not to be defanged by its competitor, rocker WLS gloated to its listeners: "If you're planning on taking a walk in suburban Buffalo Grove tonight . . . do it *very* . . . carefully. Somewhere out there, a five-foot Egyptian cobra is slithering through the grass."

At no time was the reptile positively identified as an Egyptian cobra; this interesting gap in the Great Cobra Caper was consistently overlooked in newspaper and broadcast reporting until three days had passed, when it was conclusively reported that Seymour was *not* a cobra after all, but a "harmless chicken snake." (The evidence for this reassurance was almost as spotty as the evidence that Seymour was an Egyptian cobra, but no matter: The Cobra That Wasn't makes a headline almost as good as Cobra Remains Loose in Suburb.)

What Pearson had told the police was this: several weeks previously, he had agreed to keep the snake for a vacationing friend, Eugene Bowling. Bowling told Pearson that he (Bowling) had been assured by the person who sold him the snake that Seymour was an Egyptian cobra worth \$4,000. Therefore, when Pearson discovered the empty cage, he thought a deadly snake had escaped.

It didn't take the Chicago media long to decide that Pearson's third-hand worst fears were good enough for them. "Experts have told police the cobra can travel rapidly and is capable of climbing trees or up onto houses," *Chicago Today* thundered. UPI and other print outlets disclosed that police had issued "shoot to kill" orders (in lieu, presumably, of the normal "shoot to maim" or "warning shot" that constitute routine police procedure in cobra hunts).

At least two local television stations, ABC's WLS

and CBS's WBBM, sent camera crews to join newspaper photographers at local zoos. The goal was providing a public service by showing Buffalo Grovians what a cobra looks like, to help residents distinguish Seymour from the thousands of ordinary snakes that go about their daily business in the suburb.

The *Chicago Daily News* took a comforting approach. "There are policemen lurking about," the paper assured its readers, "waiting to shoot the snake, should it appear to eat a mouse." That story was wrapped around—if you'll pardon the expression—a one-column photograph of a puffed-up Egyptian cobra.

In a city with four major newspapers, four news-gathering TV outlets and dozens of radio stations, even a cobra escape needs a new twist after a few days. A new angle was provided by the Dead Dog With Two Fang Marks on Its Leg. That development made news—until it was determined that the dog had died of heat prostration after having caught its leg in its chain; the "fang marks" proved to be old scratches.

By Wednesday, however, the fun was over, and reporters had to fall back on "life returned to normal" stories; it seems a zoo expert had determined that a skin "purportedly shed by Seymour" was not that of a "deadly cobra" at all, but rather the skin of a "harmless chicken snake."

Newspapers and wire services did what they could with this development, but after a final salvo of Cobra Brought Low headlines, they lost interest in the story—except to report that the village of Buffalo Grove had decided to bill young Pearson \$1,338 for search expenses.

"The interesting thing about that," said Gary Cummings, an assignment editor for WBBM-TV, "was that we never did determine whether the skin the expert examined came from the snake that escaped. Pearson told us that his friend gave him the shed skin along with Seymour and told him it was Seymour's skin. But there's no positive proof."

I sought out one of Chicago's better TV news editors a few weeks after Seymour's Saga had died down and asked him whether he thought the story had justified all the hysteria.

"Sure it did," was the adamant reply of WBBM

news director Van Gordon Sauter. "We had to operate under the assumption that this young man had a poisonous snake. That snake, according to the people we talked with at the zoo, had a tremendous mobility—that sonuvabitch could move a couple of blocks just like that.

"It's a dramatic story. In suburbia, supposedly, you are far from the cares and difficulties of mankind. And if there is suddenly a poisonous snake running around—well, it changes your life-style.

"Hell, we would have sent our minicamera out there for continuous coverage; the only reason we didn't was that we couldn't get a signal back from Buffalo Grove. It's in a valley.

"Look," he continued. "Animal stories are interesting to begin with. The man sitting in his living room looking at television with a cold glass of beer in his hand, he's gonna *respond* to a story about a snake in a suburb. You should have seen

some of the angles we held back on—for instance, the one about a snake seeking out warm places to rest, such as under your car hood."

Stroking his beard, Sauter glanced toward the ceiling of his dark-paneled office, where his pet parrot, with an almost theatrical sense of the moment, was beginning to escape from its cage. "I'd like to talk to you some more about this," Sauter said, "but I've got to get busy. We have a report that a gorilla and a snow leopard have been stolen from Lincoln Park Zoo."

So the Saga of Seymour, the Deadly Egyptian Cobra That Almost Bit Buffalo Grove, remains a muddled and slightly foolish example of fire-engine journalism in a competitive media city. No one was hurt by the whole thing, except one policeman, who perhaps suffered the unkindest cut of all: he was cut on the lip when he was hit in the mouth with a television microphone.

Striking coincidences department

NEWS

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(512) 476-1111

Release Date: **IMMEDIATE**
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Grover Mitchell

**MOBILE HOMES
TO BE ANCHORED**

AUSTIN, (TX), July 6--Texas Mobile Home Owners will soon have the responsibility and expense of properly blocking and anchoring their homes as a result of an act recently signed into law by Texas Governor Dolph Briscoe, according to E.L. Murray of Corpus Christi who is Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Texas Mobile Home Association.

The law becomes effective 180 days following the effective date of the minimum standards which are to be established by the Texas Performance Certification Board, the policy-making body for the Mobile Homes Division of the Texas Department of Labor and Standards. Only mobile homes purchased after this effective date will be required to be blocked and anchored in accordance with this law. Exempted are mobile homes located more than 300 feet from any other occupied or inhabited building or structure.

Actually, two sets of standards will be in effect: Mobile home dwellers within the first two tiers of coastal counties in Texas will be required to block and anchor their homes to withstand hurricane force winds and throughout

(more)

AUSTIN, Texas — Mobile home owners will soon have the responsibility and expense of properly blocking and anchoring their homes as a result of an act recently signed into law by Texas Governor Dolph Briscoe, according to E.L. Murray of Corpus Christi, chairman of the board of directors for the Texas Mobile Home Association.

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The Houston Post
July 15, 1973

Some errors and puzzles in Watergate coverage

There's been a lot of journalistic self-congratulation, but there is another side.

FINLAY LEWIS

■ By now, everyone has heard that the Watergate scandal was uncovered by the best efforts of American journalism. Less well known are the errors and disputed reports that occurred in coverage of phase one of the Watergate hearings. Such blemishes were few, a tiny fraction of the total coverage. Yet, they loomed large indeed to those whose reputations—and personal liberty—were at stake. In any event, the fumbles of journalists deserve to be reported as do the follies of public officials—and for much the same reasons.

The excitement, drama, and historic scope of the Watergate story generated intense competitive pressures among newsmen, pressures that led to inaccuracies. Errors resulted also from carelessness, the pressure of deadlines, typographical mistakes, and heavy reliance on "source stories"—stories gathered at second or third hand from sources who refused to be named.

One error led to the filing of a multimillion dollar libel suit against the Columbia Broadcasting

System. It occurred on May 8, when CBS, preceded by the Associated Press, reported the latest development in a suit brought by Common Cause, which asked the Finance Committee to Re-Elect the President to reveal campaign contributions and expenditures.

In its account of that day's developments, the AP filed a lead saying, "The Nixon re-election committee used a Bethesda, Md., accounting firm to convert campaign checks into cash during 1971, it was revealed in U.S. District Court today."

On the evening news later in the day, Walter Cronkite, using a photographic backdrop of the Watergate office complex, led his show with the same item:

Good evening. When the Watergate scandal began to break, one of the first disclosures involved the so-called laundering of campaign contributions. That is sending the contributions through a bank or banks, in this instance Mexican, thus making it difficult to trace the donor. Well, it now seems that all that long distance travel was unnecessary. There apparently was a laundry down the street, so to speak. Court records disclosed today that the Nixon campaign used a Bethesda, Md., accounting firm to convert contribution

Finlay Lewis is a Washington correspondent for the *Minneapolis Tribune*. He covered the Watergate hearings and writes frequently on politics and Congress.

checks into cash before being turned over to the campaign. The Bethesda firm, by the way, is headed by Henry Buchanan whose brother, Patrick, is a presidential speechwriter and adviser.

There was a problem with both stories. The AP account dealt with converting campaign checks into cash, while CBS referred to the process of "laundering" campaign contributions to conceal the identity of the donor. In subsequent legal papers, Buchanan's lawyers pointed out that the CBS version, in effect, accused him of a criminal act—failing to report contributions received for a political committee.

In a complaint to the Federal Communications Commission, Buchanan's lawyers argued correctly that the hearing on May 8 did not, in fact, unearth any such startling revelations. All that was disclosed, they said, was that Buchanan had a long-established trust account which he used on behalf of the finance committee along with other customers of his firm. For example, the account served to make some salary payments to committee employees with money deposited by the committee, the lawyers said.

Three days later CBS broadcast a correction and added, "We regret the error." Buchanan answered by moving to file suit (on rather shaky legal ground), accusing the network and Cronkite of libel, slander and invasion of privacy.

The AP moved its "corrective version" on May 14, six days after its initial report, acknowledging that it had "reported erroneously . . . that the Nixon re-election committee used the accounting firm of Henry M. Buchanan to convert campaign checks into cash during 1971."

Approached about the mistake by the *Columbia Journalism Review*, CBS Washington staffers and lawyers did not choose to comment. The writers for the AP said simply that they had erred.

Mistaken Identity

Mistaking one former attorney general for another amply illustrates the effect of deadline pressures. The scene is the Washington office of the National Broadcasting Company, Wednesday, August 1, about 4:30 p.m.

A network representative has just received a copy of a 1972 White House memo offered to the

Watergate committee. The memo, from then White House special counsel Charles W. Colson to H. R. Haldeman, says that former Attorney General John Mitchell may have perjured himself in previous testimony. The reporter quickly tells this to a producer in Washington who relays it, by telephone, to a producer in New York, who tells a script writer and within the hour John Chancellor is opening the nightly news with a report on a memo that "says that former Attorney General Richard Kleindienst lied under oath about at least part of the ITT deal."

The scene then shifts to NBC reporter Carl Stern, who was covering the Senate's Watergate committee that day. Stern correctly reports that the man described in the memo is Mitchell and not Kleindienst.

What the Man Really Said

When Jim Lehrer of the Public Broadcasting Service finished summarizing testimony by John Caulfield before the select committee, Lehrer flatly declared that Caulfield said just the opposite of what he was trying to say.

In his opening statement to the Senate committee, Caulfield said he carried offers of executive clemency from former White House counsel John Dean to James McCord, one of the convicted Watergate conspirators. Caulfield testified:

At no time in any conversations with Mr. McCord did I advise, pressure or threaten him in an attempt to make him accept the offer of executive clemency. I viewed my role simply as one of a messenger and while I tried to give both Mr. Dean and Mr. McCord the full flavor of what was going on at both ends of this message-transacting process, I actively refrained from injecting myself into the process at either end.

Later, broadcaster Lehrer summarized: "That concludes John Caulfield's opening statement, a history that begins with his birth and ends with his involvement in trying to convince James McCord to join the Watergate team and go to jail, quietly please."

Lehrer's summary—especially his use of the word "convince"—suggests that Caulfield played an activist (and possibly illegal) role in obstructing justice. Indeed, that is a possible conclusion—

but, since it contradicted the witness' own assertion, it should have been labeled explicitly as a conclusion, rather than tossed off in a brief, apparently factual, summary.

Lehrer says now that his summary was based on the whole of Caulfield's testimony and particularly on several exchanges with the panel, including this answer to a question asked by Sen. Weicker: "I know when wrongdoing is occurring. I have indicated here that I knew that the offer of executive clemency in this matter was wrong, yes sir, I knew that. But what I am saying to you, sir, is that my loyalties, and especially to the President of the United States, overrode those considerations."

Lehrer said, "Like everything else, if I were an historian and had a little more time, I might have chosen a different word, but I'll stand by what I said. It was a legitimate comment based on my interpretation—which is my job—of what Caulfield said both in his written statement and in his answers to questions."

Snarled in the Tapes

The issue of the presidential tapes also has been a challenging story for reporters to unwind.

Peter Jay wrote about conflicting public statements in the *Washington Post* on the day after the President's press conference of August 22. Jay cited the following discrepancy: "Mr. Nixon said he let Haldeman listen to only one tape, that of a meeting with Dean last September 15. Haldeman, on the other hand, has testified that the President let him listen as well to tapes of the March 21 meeting with Dean."

However, close attention to Mr. Nixon's statement suggests there was in fact no discrepancy between the President and Haldeman on this point.

In answering a question about the tapes, Mr. Nixon said at his press conference: "He [Haldeman] listened only to the tape on September 15—this is after he left office—in which he had participated in the conversation throughout." In other words, Mr. Nixon said that Haldeman listened to only one tape after leaving office.

The President's language is less than crystal clear, but his answer is consistent with Haldeman's Senate testimony; there, Haldeman said he listened to a second tape—of the March 21 meeting

—before he left office. Haldeman did not resign his White House post until April 30, and apparently, did hear only one tape after leaving office.

Asked about the story, Jay agreed that "it could have had another paragraph explaining the ambiguity a little more."

Two Plus To Equals Confusion

The case of the misplaced homonym arose from the next presidential press conference, held September 5. In the White House transcript of that event, Mr. Nixon is quoted as saying, in answer to a question about the tapes: "As a matter of fact, the only time I listened to the tapes, *to certain tapes*—and I didn't listen to all of them, of course—was on June 4th [italics added]."

The New York *Times* transcript of the press conference provides a slight but significantly different version of the President's answer. It quotes Mr. Nixon: "As a matter of fact, the only time I listened to the tapes, *two certain tapes*—and I didn't listen to all of them, of course—was on June 4th [italics added]."

The next week's issue of *Time* pondered Mr. Nixon's assertion, also made at the September 5 press conference, that "there is nothing whatever in the tapes that is inconsistent" with his repeated statements of innocence in regard to the Watergate crimes. Continued the magazine: "His answer was puzzling because he said that he had listened to only two of the controversial tapes (Cox is seeking nine tapes), which would seem to be an inadequate base for his generalization that none of the tapes contradict his position."

The confusion was compounded when United Press International moved a story on Sunday, September 9, describing *Time's* report on the tapes. The wire copy included this paragraph: "At his news conference last week, Nixon said he had listened to only two of the Watergate tapes."

On Monday morning, a news cycle later, UPI's opposition produced its own account of the *Time* article. The AP, however, made the phrase "two certain tapes" a direct quotation attributable to the President. About three hours later, the AP moved a correction to make the quote conform to the White House transcript.

Newsweek also reported the President as saying

he had listened to only two tapes. Unlike *Time*, however, *Newsweek's* account mentioned the matter only in passing.

The incident led to consternation at *Time* because a week later the magazine received a letter from presidential aide Ron Ziegler pointing out the discrepancy.

A researcher for *Time* said she missed the mistake in verifying the original copy because someone else was using the White House transcript and so she referred to the *New York Times*. She added that it was unusual for the *Times* "to be so off base."

Asked how the writer of the original story came to make the error in the first place, she said there was never any question in the mind of the writer or the correspondent in Washington that Nixon had meant "two" rather than "to." She added that many newspapers reported Nixon had said "two." Before running Ziegler's letter in its October 1 issue, *Time* staff members went so far as to listen to a recording of the press conference, but this was inconclusive, the researcher said.

White House transcripts of press conferences are usually available within hours of a press conference, but these aren't infallible either. While this particular transcript had what is probably the correct "to", it also contained a typographical error in its previous sentence.

Where Was Ehrlichman?

In a breaking story, that is, one which is developing at the time it is being written, there are always inserts, notes to kill one paragraph and substitute another. In addition, there can be several new leads, or beginnings, to a dispatch. But there was no update to correct an inaccuracy in AP's report on testimony given to the Senate committee by John Dean on June 27.

Dean had testified about a meeting on the previous September 15 involving him, Haldeman and President Nixon. The AP story included this sentence: "Nixon chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and domestic adviser John D. Ehrlichman were present at the meeting."

Both Haldeman and Dean agreed in their testimony that the only other person present besides themselves at that meeting was the President.

The AP writers attribute the error to the pressures of a breaking story and say that it was never corrected because it was never caught.

A number of news stories made incorrect predictions, and there were damaging disclosures that drew sharp denials. In such cases it is more difficult to fix blame: what if the views of a news source, accurately reported, turn out to be wrong? Or, what if a witness fails to perform according to advance reports: have reporters made a mistake, or did the witness change his story?

The following are examples of unreliable reports—reports which, even when based on accurate quotation, were not substantiated by subsequent events. Whether journalists or news subjects are to blame, the task of clearing up the subsequent confusion went undone. Not only do journalists have a duty to clear up confusions they cause; they also must balance the competitive pressure to be "first" against the even greater need for reliable information, and for follow-ups to conflicting reports.

Usually Reliable Sources

The normal problems of accurately reporting a complicated story were compounded by the competitive pressures that began building after the *Washington Post* provided a glimpse of the scandal's full dimension. A correct account of official or public developments in the case was not sufficient. Suspicious of a cover-up, reporters pursued sources and leads with remarkable aggressiveness, both to discover more details and to get ahead of everyone else.

Consequently, the "source" story came to be much used, resulting occasionally in stories that were incorrect or misleading.

Private interviews between James McCord and the Senate committee late in March proved especially troublesome. On March 29, Sam Donaldson of ABC had this report: "ABC news has been told by a source close to the committee that McCord said former White House [aide] Harry Dent . . . [was] part of a general sabotage and espionage operation directed by the White House. Dent called that 'false.'"

On April 9, Donaldson apologized. "McCord's lawyer says McCord made no reference to Dent at

all. Other sources corroborate that, and we now believe our source for the story was mistaken," Donaldson reported on network news.

Donaldson believes that his source simply had misled him. The source had been trustworthy in the past, he said, but in this case Donaldson had no explanation for why the source had failed him.

"I Wouldn't Back Away"

McCord's testimony led to many leaks, including a whopper concerning Haldeman. On March 30, Muriel Dobbin of the *Baltimore Sun* reported: "H. R. Haldeman, a top-level White House aide, was 'fully aware' of a 1972 political espionage scheme allegedly plotted by John N. Mitchell, the former attorney general, according to sworn testimony by James W. McCord, Jr., before the Senate committee investigating the Watergate case, it was disclosed yesterday by congressional sources."

That same day, the *Washington Star-News*, in a report on McCord's secret testimony by Robert Walters and James Doyle, said, "H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, President Nixon's chief of staff, has been identified before the Senate committee investigating the Watergate affair as having prior knowledge of Republican espionage and sabotage activities last year."

Then, the paper added this qualifying paragraph: "But as in the case of most of the other Nixon aides implicated by convicted Watergate conspirator James W. McCord, the information about Haldeman is understood to have come to McCord second hand."

Walter Rugaber of the *New York Times* was even more circumspect in a story published the same day. There was no reference to Haldeman in Rugaber's lead. But several paragraphs later in the story he reported:

"According to reliable sources, McCord . . . cited hearsay among his co-conspirators as the basis for the following major assertions: . . . H. R. Haldeman, the White House chief of staff, 'knew what was going on' at the Committee for the Re-Election of the President. One source said that McCord had not elaborated on this assertion."

The story filed the same day by Clark Hoyt of the *Knight Newspapers* was similarly qualified.

But the problem with all these stories, particu-

larly those in the *Sun* and the *Star-News*, was their suggestion that McCord was preparing to implicate Haldeman in some aspect of the Watergate burglary. When McCord testified publicly before the committee, he offered no direct evidence implicating Haldeman; in fact, he made only passing references to Haldeman.

There is always the possibility that McCord changed his testimony between his private meetings with the committee in March and the open sessions in May. However, the fact that no senator interrogated him about Haldeman suggests that McCord supplied no damaging evidence against Haldeman to the committee.

Asked about the article she wrote for the *Sun*, Miss Dobbin said, "I wouldn't back away from that story for one minute. I think the sources were accurate." Why didn't she follow-up, noting McCord's failure to implicate Haldeman in public? Miss Dobbin said, "I was reasonably satisfied that there were enough indications that Haldeman in fact had over-all knowledge of what was going on."

"I think it is true that with any source story you take something of a risk because you're really relying on someone else's impressions all the time. And you have to take into account the possibility that what McCord said at one point, he may not have repeated at another point."

An Emphatic Denial

On the CBS Evening News of July 9, Lesley Stahl had a source story revealing certain damning admissions allegedly made by John Mitchell in a private session with the committee. The source told Stahl that Mitchell had admitted having "joined in the cover-up" on June 21, four days after the Watergate burglary, because it was then that Mitchell learned "for the first time of the plumbers' operation."

Stahl reported:

"Mitchell realized, in the source's words, that Hunt and Liddy had them over a barrel, and because of that he urged Herbert Kalmbach to raise hush money for the Watergate defendants and also approved the destruction of the wiretap records."

The story was meant to anticipate Mitchell's public testimony that began the next day. But when the former attorney general took the witness

table, he emphatically denied any involvement in the "hush money" plot or in destroying "wiretap records." The discrepancy went unnoticed as CBS prepared the coverage of Mitchell's public appearance, says Edward Fouhy, Washington producer of the CBS Evening News. Had the discrepancy been noted, Fouhy said, "We certainly would have attempted to reflect the fact that what Mitchell said in public—which we covered in full—was at some variance with what we were told he had said in private, or with what he in fact said in private to the committee."

Bernstein and Woodward

A similar problem occurs in a story written in the April 19 editions of the *Washington Post* by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

Attributing their disclosures to "three sources in the White House and the Committee for the Re-Election of the President," Woodward and Bernstein wrote: "Former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell and White House counsel John Dean III approved and helped plan the Watergate bugging operation, according to President Nixon's former special assistant, Jeb Stuart Magruder."

Magruder testified at the Senate hearings in June that Mitchell approved the bugging operation, but he offered no such evidence against Dean.

"The *Post* story," Bernstein said, was based on the "best information then available." At the time he and Woodward were piecing together Magruder's version of events, there were no assurances that any of the principals in the case would ever give a candid public accounting of what had happened in the Watergate scandal, Bernstein said. That made it "essential" that the Magruder story, involving Mitchell and Dean, be written, he added. Indeed, while Bernstein's motives may have been laudable, nevertheless the story was at least partially incorrect.

The Leap from the Chair

Early in May, *Newsweek* provided a remarkably accurate preview of Dean's testimony before the Senate committee during the last week in June. The testimony, however, did not include one detail presented in the *Newsweek* account. This involved the President's reaction when he allegedly

was told by Dean at the March 21 meeting that Dean had not prepared a report "clearing White House staffers."

"At this point, sources quoted Dean as saying that the 'President came out of his chair' into a half crouch of astonishment and shock," the magazine reported.

Questioned about the incident by Sen. Daniel Inouye, Dean said, "I have never seen the President come out of his chair in that manner."

Nicholas Horrock, one of the *Newsweek* reporters who researched the story on Dean, told the *Columbia Journalism Review* that that particular incident "came to *Newsweek* from more than one source who recounted what they knew of Dean's conversations with the President." He said that the incident was included in the story to provide some description of the atmosphere in the President's office during the Nixon-Dean encounter. Horrock attached no great significance to it except as a detail contributing drama to the account of the meeting.

However, it could have much wider implications. For if Nixon did come out of his chair in shock after Dean told him he had not prepared a report, a possible conclusion is that the President did not know in advance of the cover-up activities, as Dean charged. Another possible conclusion is that Nixon was learning for the first time on March 21 that he had been misled by at least one of his top aides. Was *Newsweek's* account in error? Or did Dean later change his story? These questions have not been pursued, or, as yet, resolved.

One Thing Leads to Another

Seymour Hersh wrote a story played on page one of the *New York Times* that was right and then wrong.

Newsweek's revelation that Dean "was preparing to associate Mr. Nixon with the cover-up" was front page news on May 6 in many newspapers.

But then, on May 10, the *New York Times* published a story by Hersh that seemed to point in the opposite direction. Hersh reported in his lead:

"Senate and federal investigators say that, on the basis of extended interviews with John W. Dean III, they believe he has no evidence to link President Nixon either to prior knowledge of the

Watergate bugging or to any subsequent cover-up, reliable sources said today."

Hersh insists that the "story was right at the time it was written . . . my federal sources were excellent." It was not until later in the month that Dean began telling investigators of his conclusion that Mr. Nixon was involved in the cover-up, Hersh insists.

His defense of his story illustrates one of the most vexing problems plaguing Watergate reporters. From the beginning the story has been enormously fluid, with the rush of events often making

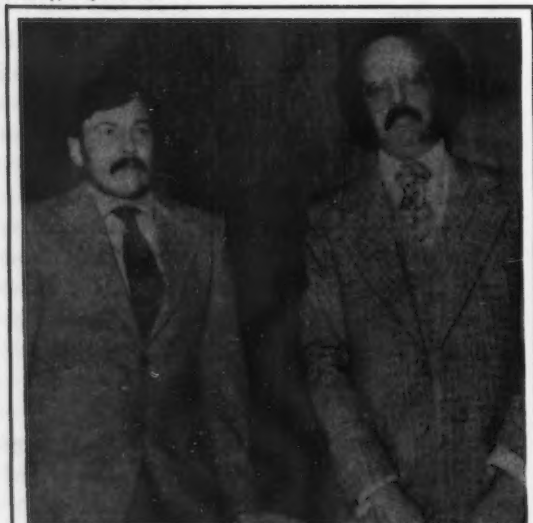
accurate coverage a transitory accomplishment at best. And this difficulty has been compounded by the continual need to rely on unidentified sources, with the result that reporters frequently write on the basis of someone else's impression rather than on the basis of their own observation. Then too, while the source may be reliable, the people the source is quoting may turn out to be liars.

(Editor's Note: For some additional questions that were left unasked, see the article on newspaper coverage by Ben Bagdikian, which begins on page 44.)

Mistaken identities: if at first you don't succeed . . .

The pictures and captions reproduced below were published on successive days in the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner.

Friday, September 21



Bruce W. Newman, left, and Attorney Fred J. Nameth appear outside court after the deputy sheriff was arraigned on murder charge in shooting.

Saturday, September 22

Errors Corrected In Photo Identities



JAMES J. LALLY



FRED J. NAMETH

Sunday, September 23

Identities Corrected

Inadvertently, in Saturday's edition of The Herald-Examiner the photographs of an attorney and his client in a Lakewood murder case were incorrectly identified.

The name of the client, James J. Lally, was carried in a caption under the photograph of attorney Fred J. Nameth, and the attorney's name appeared under the photograph of Lally.

The Herald-Examiner regrets the errors and takes this opportunity to correct them. Lally is one of two de-



JAMES J. LALLY



FRED J. NAMETH

charged Los Angeles County Edward A. Garcia, 34. Also accused is Bruce W. Newman, the June 12 shooting death of 34.



Wide World Photos

The Howard Baker boom

Baker may be qualified and discerning—but unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the coverage he received during phase one of the Watergate hearings.

ROBERT WALTERS

■ *Parade* called him "the matinee idol of the nation." His "boyish charm" impressed the *National Observer*. "Those good looks are beginning to get to the women," said the *Wall Street Journal*, adding, "even the men seem impressed." *Women's Wear Daily* anointed him "Studliest of them all."

It sounded like a promotion for Paul Newman, Burt Reynolds, or Robert Redford. But the publications quoted above were describing, not a movie star, but a senator—Howard H. Baker, Jr. And the discovery that Baker had "it"—perhaps as much of "it" as was required, in an earlier generation, to launch the career of silent film star Clara Bow—contributed to an explosion of news stories speculating that Baker, the Tennessee Republican who sits as vice-chairman of the Senate committee investigating the Watergate affair, might well become a presidential candidate.

All three national television networks dispatched camera crews to Baker's home in Huntsville, Tenn. The *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, *Newsday*, and the *National Observer* sent reporters to the Cumberland Mountains to interview Baker's 94-year-old grandmother, his former law partner, and Baker's elementary school teacher.

The impact of the extraordinary media "blitz" was measured by the pollsters in August. A George Gallup survey found that 11 per cent of Republicans preferred Baker as the party's 1976 presidential nominee, compared to the 1 per cent who chose Baker last April, before the hearings. And a July Louis Harris poll made the striking discovery that Baker outpolled Sen. Edward M. Kennedy in a hypothetical head-to-head presidential contest. The results: 45 per cent for Baker, 44 per cent for Kennedy, and 11 per cent (of the sample of 1,485) undecided.

Obviously, journalists had participated in a Howard Baker boom. The coverage was based in part on the senator's own performance in the hearings, but it went far beyond that. A study of the coverage boosting Baker as a presidential candidate shows that, for several months, the stories failed to provide evidence or solid argument that Baker *deserved* to be either a president or a presidential candidate. Most stories brushed over the senator's voting record; presented little or no evidence that Baker's personal or business history had been examined; and provided precious little scrutiny of Baker's performance as a senator.

Baker may well be a man with an impeccable background, the loftiest of motives, the finest executive talents and the highest qualifications for national office. This article is not intended to suggest otherwise. It is my aim to suggest that ques-

Robert Walters is a political writer for the Washington Star-News.



tions of Baker's competence were largely ignored in the spate of articles that appeared during phase one of the Watergate hearings. Because he is the most recent of the many politicians identified by journalists as the "man to watch," Baker's rise to prominence makes a timely case study. And it is a disturbing case study because he, like others before him, attracted the national spotlight after a television debut and a hasty journalistic review of biographical tidbits.

How, then, did the Howard Baker boom begin? Why do we get such superficial coverage about something as serious as a possible presidential candidacy? What were some of the obvious omissions in this case? And what can we learn from the recent boom?

Baker's newfound status as a political "star" began with television network decisions to give full coverage to the Watergate hearings. But, journalistic decisions to focus features on Baker certainly gave him special status.

Where, when and how did reporters first conclude that Baker was on his way to political stardom? Some reporters speak only of an "instinctive" reaction. In a number of cases, however, reporters decided to profile Baker because *other* reporters were thinking about it—the subject arose in conversations among newsmen at the press tables and in the corridors during hearings recesses. "I was struck by Baker's questioning—he was asking the best questions," said Richard Ryan of the *Detroit News*. But before writing, Ryan says he "asked five or six housewives who had been watching" to confirm his hunch about Baker's appeal.

Don Campbell of the Gannett News Service cited an additional motive for writing his Baker story: the Gannett newspaper chain had purchased the Nashville *Banner*, but that Tennessee paper retained its own Washington correspondent. To impress the *Banner* with its desire to serve, Gannett's Washington bureau continually seeks Tennessee stories, Campbell said. "In this case, the story got good play everywhere—maybe 15 or 20 papers used it," he added.

Most of the Baker stories were strikingly similar in tone and content. They followed a formula favored for the fast, anecdotal, and, above all, entertaining profile: a rehash of Baker's staff-prepared biography; genial quotes from school teachers, former law partners and friends; tidbits about Baker's wife, children, pets and hobbies. There were the obligatory references to the political careers of Baker's father (the late Rep. Howard H. Baker, Sr.), stepmother (who served her husband's unexpired term in Congress after his death), and father-in-law (the late Sen. Everett M. Dirksen); Baker's unsuccessful races for the post of Senate minority leader; and, of course, the countless "mash notes" Baker received after being discovered by the daytime television audience. Most of these formula biographies were produced by reporters who were searching for an interesting "sidebar" to the hearings, rather than those who specialize in political coverage. The stories were not, as a rule, balanced, comprehensive, or even very serious. Reporters owe themselves and the electorate a far more serious examination of those they identify as possible candidates for national



Wide World Photos

office. Stories that seek merely to confirm the "vibrations" felt by television viewers obviously do not meet that standard.

Of course, Baker and his staff cooperated once the boom was underway. Reporters profiling any public figure visit the subject's press officer, and they often request copies of previous stories from which details can be "borrowed." Annie Lou Hughes, a Baker press aide, said such requests caught her by surprise. "In early June," she said, "some reporters from a newsmagazine came into the office and wanted to see our clippings on the senator. I showed them our Tennessee clippings, the only ones we had at the time, and they said, 'No, not these, we want the presidential clippings.' We didn't have any, and I felt terrible because they were talking about a presidential campaign and we really didn't know anything about it." The Baker press office caught on quickly enough, however. At first, favorable stories were photocopied to meet individual requests, but later, they were printed to meet the great demand.

Throughout the media build-up, Baker was exceptionally deft in handling the press. Rudy Abramson, a Washington reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, recalls his visit to Baker's home in Huntsville during the July 4 holiday weekend. "A staff man emerged with a 'Baker for President' T-shirt," according to Abramson. "Baker, as much amused as angered, ordered the campaign shirt out of sight."

Abramson describes Baker as "accommodating but ever careful" in his relations with the news media. He noticed that Baker allowed television sound men to place a microphone under his shirt

before he was filmed playing tennis. One television newsman, Paul Duke of the National Broadcasting Company, noted that Baker (a photographer himself) particularly understood that TV reporters prefer action film to static interviews that show only "talking heads." Like other network representatives, Duke and his NBC crew were treated to Baker's sound-on-film tennis performance. Then, Duke recalls, Baker mentioned another hobby, riding a trail bike through the nearby woods; after some discussion about camera positions and angles, Baker obliged the TV crew with his bike-riding routine. In contrast, Duke recalls a trip he made in August to film Sen. Sam J. Ervin, Jr., the Senate committee's chairman, at his home in Morganton, North Carolina. "He was minimally cooperative," says Duke. "At first, he was reluctant to walk around the courthouse square while discussing Watergate developments, but he consented because he knew me. Ervin, of course, couldn't care less," Duke concludes.

A few publications noted that Sen. Baker had tried to make himself photogenic. "In the six weeks before the hearings began on May 17, he lost 20 pounds by following a low-carbohydrate diet," said the *National Observer*. And the *Los Angeles Times* described Baker's efforts to accommodate television photographers in Tennessee. But there was another cause of the Baker publicity—namely, the deliberate omission from the Senate select committee of senators who were thought to be presidential candidates. Aware that the hearings would be politically explosive, the Senate's Democratic leadership eliminated such senators, to neutralize in advance any White House charges that committee members were seeking personal advancement. Sylvia Westerman, coordinator of Watergate coverage for the Columbia Broadcasting System, says, "I can remember sitting around with other CBS people a couple of weeks before this thing started and agreeing that the guy who would probably stand out was Baker."

Journalistic tradition also contributed to the Howard Baker boom—the tradition that grants to the Washington press corps the job of scouting for national political talent and political trends. Washington's press corps has not done this job

very well in recent years. Only after unpredicted support arose for Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy in 1968 did most Washington newsmen recognize that President Lyndon B. Johnson was indeed vulnerable. At that year's Republican Convention, some reporters were freely predicting that Richard M. Nixon could be blocked by the combined opposition of California's Governor Ronald Reagan and New York's Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller. One day after that scenario was offered to the public, Mr. Nixon was nominated by an overwhelming vote. And in 1972, most Washington reporters did not expect Sen. George S. McGovern to win primary contests or the nomination.

Reporters who seek to act as political "talent scouts" must inevitably answer complex questions: What criteria, techniques and standards should be used in assessing presidential candidates? "Star

quality," "sex appeal"—and of course, "charisma"—probably do affect the voters, but how much weight should such things be given? Is charisma required at all in a president? If it is, are political reporters competent judges of it? Is it reasonable to assume that a competent or even outstanding performance as a member of a congressional committee is good evidence of an individual's ability to head the executive branch of government?

The Howard Baker coverage was based on very simple answers to these questions; interestingly, as phase one of the hearings ended, some journalists who had contributed to the boom grew personally disenchanted with Baker—but their disenchantment, like their earlier infatuation, was all too often based on a judgment of Baker's *bazaaz*. "In order to make his point, he restated it and restated it, to the point of wearying you," said one reporter.

Some Howard Baker Coverage

The National Observer:

Possessed of a boyish charm and a commanding but reassuring manner, Baker shows signs of emerging as the star of the Senate proceedings. There is even speculation that . . . the Watergate hearings [might] pluck Howard Baker from the ranks of bright, ambitious Senate conservatives and place him in the forefront of speculation for the Republican presidential nomination in 1976.

The Wall Street Journal:

Baker . . . just might come out of it with Richard Nixon's old job. . . . Until Watergate, he was known best as "Ev Dirksen's son-in-law" for his marriage to the daughter of the Senate's late minority leader. Now with the TV lens on him six hours a day, three days a week, those good looks are beginning to get to the women out there in television land. . . . Even the men seem impressed with his ability to walk the thin line between being a loyal Republican and asking tough questions of the Watergate gang. Fan mail is pouring in, and, to a Baker staff man, the senator has become "the deadlock candidate at the '76 convention."

The Gannett News Service:

During the heavier moments, Baker has shown himself to be a skilled cross-examiner, a stickler on points of law, a guardian against Democratic excesses and a disciple of innovation. . . . Baker

thus far comes through as the strongest and most versatile of the seven committee members. It has been the kind of performance that would do justice to a future national political candidate, and one suspects that somewhere in the back of Baker's mind is that thought.

The Christian Science Monitor:

With his deep-throated Tennessee accent and his probing questions and photogenic face, he is emerging as a star of the televised hearings. And he also may be rising as the newest political comet in the Republican firmament.

The New York Post:

Baker has so masterfully handled himself in investigating the Watergate scandal that sooner or later he will have to deal with the fact that public adulation, media speculation and the GOP's need for fresh, clean faces have placed him in a position of deciding whether to begin maneuvering for the presidential nomination.

The Knight Newspapers:

The sensational hearings have transformed him from a little-known senator into an instant television star. . . . More than a few who have watched Baker in action in recent weeks observed that successful national political careers have been founded on less. This inevitably spawns speculation that the friendly Tennessean should now be automatically included in the list of 1976 presidential possibilities.

NBC's Paul Duke offered a similar opinion: "He started off making a tremendous impact on people, but I have the impression that in the end the Baker magic had somehow failed." Some reporters did offer substantive reasons for their disenchantment. Lesley Stahl, a CBS reporter covering the hearings, said, "I personally think that in the end he became more partisan, although I don't think it came over on television."

Some reporters did search beyond the puffery. Loye Miller, Jr., the political reporter for the Knight newspapers, had done a "formula" story touting Baker as a man to watch early in the hearings—but he also is the only reporter known to have conducted an early investigation of Baker's private business and financial transactions. That effort produced a story detailing a prospective bank merger case in Tennessee in which Baker received a \$247,000 "commission" in his capacity as representative for one of the banks; Baker gave \$102,000 of the commission to a business partner.

The accuracy of Miller's story was confirmed by a spokesman for Baker, who said that prior to the transaction the senator discussed his involvement with federal officials in charge of bank regulation, and was assured that his participation as a public official did not raise any questions of improper conduct or conflict of interest. At issue here is not any suggestion of impropriety on Baker's part, but rather the suggestion that the news media should be willing to spend as much time scrutinizing business transactions in which a senator profits by \$145,000 as they are willing to examine his tennis game, family tree and love letters from television viewers. As Loye Miller says, "You cannot dismiss a fine television personality, but we probably ought to be a lot more careful when we talk about a guy as a presidential possibility."

Similarly, only one early story about Baker, a June 16 profile by Mark R. Arnold in the *National Observer*, included a serious review of Baker's voting record on major issues. Many other efforts devoted more space to anecdotal discussions of Dirksen, Baker's father-in-law, than to Baker's positions on major issues of the day.

Bruce Blossat, political columnist for the Newspaper Enterprise Association, notes other glaring omissions in the early stories about Baker: "If he

were President, what would his philosophy of foreign policy be? What about his economic strategy? What are his great visions for America?" Baker has been able to avoid all such questions by adopting the traditional posture of politicians whose balloons are just getting off the ground. It's known as the "Aw, shucks, gee whiz, fellas, you really mean somebody thinks I might be president?" approach, and in Baker's case, it sounds like this: "I

Some key Baker votes

For the record, here's the summary and analysis of Baker's votes on key issues as described by Mark R. Arnold in the *National Observer*. Little of this material was included in the early Baker coverage.

Baker has opposed forced busing, a federal no-fault auto insurance bill, reduction of the oil-depletion allowance, establishment of a consumer-protection agency, reduction of marijuana penalties and a cutoff of war funds. He favored the supersonic transport plane, anti-ballistic missile system, the nominations of G. Harrold Carswell and Clement Haynsworth to the Supreme Court, and the "no-knock" search provision of the 1970 District of Columbia Crime Bill. He has "inherited" from Dirksen sponsorship of the school-prayer amendment to the Constitution.

Nevertheless, Hugh Scott calls Baker a pragmatic conservative—as opposed to a dogmatic conservative—by which he means a conservative whose views are flexible enough to change with the times. Baker was sponsor of the 18-year-old vote and helped fashion a compromise that won Republican support for the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

This year, Baker is offering legislation to control strip mining of coal. And he says the Watergate disclosures, coming on top of a Supreme Court decision limiting the government's power to tap phones in national security cases, "has made me reassess my position" supporting government wire-tapping.

In addition, Baker's staff points out that the senator has been a principal Republican supporter of legislation to improve the quality of air and water. He was also a leader of the successful campaign to open the Highway Trust Fund for use in developing mass transportation.

don't think I'm an ambitious man. I suspect if you ever reached the place where you honored the thought by a few serious moments of contemplation, you must emerge terrified. . . . No, I would not want to be president, but I would not be afraid of it." The senator's wife, however, is somewhat more direct: "Does he want to be president? Let me put it this way: He does not want to be vice president." (Both of those quotations come from a *Washington Post* profile, but the Bakers offered similar views to other interviewers.)

Another subject that escaped close examination is Baker's credibility, notably the fact that he misled a number of reporters when asked, early in the year, if he had met with the President shortly after being named vice chairman of the Senate committee. In a transcribed interview with the *Chicago Tribune*, Baker was asked: "Have you discussed this with anyone from the White House?" He replied: "No, our contacts with the White House consist of the routine housekeeping type," and then identified two low-level members of the President's staff who had contacted him on routine matters. Similarly, two reporters for the *Washington Star-News* (I was one of them) confronted Baker last spring to ask specifically about a report that he had met with Mr. Nixon to discuss the Senate investigation. He was unequivocally negative in his response.

It was not until John W. Dean III, the ousted White House counsel, appeared before the committee as a witness that it was disclosed that Baker not only had met with Mr. Nixon on the matter but had specifically requested the meeting be kept secret. Baker learned beforehand about the disclosure Dean planned to make and pre-empted Dean's potentially damaging revelation by belatedly acknowledging the meeting during a Sunday television interview program, one day before Dean was scheduled to testify. (I later complained to Baker's press secretary, Ronald McMahan, that the senator had knowingly lied to me less than a week after his White House meeting. McMahan responded with an explanation of the type made infamous by Ronald Ziegler as Nixon's press spokesman: "You asked if he met with the President to discuss Watergate and he told you he hadn't. That was technically correct," McMahan said, "because what he

really discussed with the President was the issue of executive privilege.")

Only a few reporters who wrote early stories—notably Myra MacPherson of the *Washington Post* and Kandy Stroud of *Women's Wear Daily*—pointed out that Baker, notwithstanding his current posture as a nonpartisan critic of illegal and immoral activities in the Nixon White House, has long been a friend and ally of the President—a relationship that includes a seconding speech Baker made for Nixon at the 1968 Republican National Convention and a Nixon offer of a Supreme Court seat relayed to Baker through then Attorney General John N. Mitchell. Stroud wrote:

"Baker admits that his 17-year-old daughter, Cissy, regards Julie Eisenhower as her 'idol' and that his wife, Joy, is a Nixon fan and predicts the President will come out of Watergate 'smelling like a rose . . . stronger than ever.'"

In the past two years, both Democrats and Republicans have been seriously embarrassed by vice presidential choices. It was not until after selection of Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton as the Democratic vice presidential candidate that his psychiatric history became known. And it was a Justice Department investigation of Spiro T. Agnew's past that led to his resignation. True, it was an investigation by the Knight Newspapers that forced the facts about Eagleton to become public, and the *New York Times* had previously made an effort to look into Agnew's political dealings in Maryland; all that effort earned for the *Times* in 1968 were indignant denials by Mitchell and other Nixon aides.

In both the Eagleton and Agnew cases, the news media began to probe *after* the candidate had been selected. With an increasingly sophisticated electorate and a growing concern for standards in politics, more complete pictures are needed of people who offer themselves as the country's leaders—not the stereotyped, one-dimensional portraits that were offered at the height of the Baker boom last spring. "We've got long enough to go between now and 1976 to tell if Baker's legs have any weight on them," concludes Loye Miller, Knight's political reporter. "But the thing to do is to be more careful in the first place."

How well does the White House press perform?

Some of these beat men could do more—if their jobs were re-defined.

JULES WITCOVER

■ During President Nixon's first news conference in more than five months, members of the White House press corps stood outside his San Clemente home last August and confronted him with allegations that he had: breached diplomatic confidentiality; closed his eyes to Watergate; conspired with two of his suspected aides and aided in the defense of one of them; attempted bribery of the judge in the Pentagon Papers trial; violated his oath of office and thus invited impeachment; smeared his opponents; obstructed justice; and lied to the American people on the bombing of Cambodia.

By any standard, it was a remarkable performance for the American press, particularly for a group that in recent years has been denigrated as a bunch of patsies. For as long as presidential press conferences have been filmed for unedited release (under Eisenhower) or televised live (under Kennedy), the charge has been made that the White House press corps—about forty reporters who spend most of their time on the beat, plus broadcast technicians and other semi-regulars—are lapdogs of the Chief Executive. They are prima donnas, the criticism goes; they are spoiled by their

proximity to power, by the first-class quarters at the White House and the first-class travel accommodations they enjoy; by their prestige compared to their ditch-digging brethren on less glamorous beats. All these emoluments, the critics have contended, have dulled the cutting edge of the White House press corps. The result, from this point of view, is a White House press report that is often an extension of the President's propaganda mill.

Exhibit A in this argument usually is Watergate; not only did the White House press corps fail to break the story but it also seemed unable or unwilling to press the President for answers once the story was out. A point frequently made is that when Mr. Nixon held a press conference in San Clemente shortly after the Watergate break-in, not a single reporter asked him about Watergate. One of the most competent and highly regarded reporters on the beat, John Osborne of the *New Republic*, wrote a piece on his own failure to do so.

When Mr. Nixon in that press conference sloughed off Watergate by saying no one "presently employed" in his administration was involved in the affair, nobody asked him whether he knew who had ordered the bugging and why, Osborne wrote. "I stood within 10 feet of him and didn't even try to ask that simple and obvious question," he said. The comment brought a stream

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of mail to the magazine. One reader asked: "I am anxious to know why so many good reporters, who face President Nixon and his workers every day, are intimidated by the man and what he stands for. Is he so awesome that he is beyond question? Why were you, Mr. Osborne, afraid to ask that simple and obvious question?"

Osborne replied that he wasn't afraid, but he admitted that "respect for the presidency and a sense of the futility of trying to make this President say anything he doesn't want to say do have [a] mesmerizing effect." He preferred, he wrote, to seek his answers in private meetings with Nixon aides; the idea that public press conferences were "useful instruments of public information," he said, was "an illusion." In fact, he wrote, "hard questions do the President more good than harm when they are asked at televised press conferences. Broadcast reporters, who get much more mail than writing reporters do, are deluged with letters hostile to them and friendly to Mr. Nixon when they question him in a fashion that seems to many viewers to be disrespectful of the presidency." (Osborne now says he no longer holds such a lowly view of the press conference, but still believes it benefits the President, not the press.)

One broadcast reporter who long has been in disfavor with the Nixon administration and who asked the President one of the toughest questions posed to him at the August 22 press conference—Dan Rather of CBS News—candidly acknowledges disappointment in his own performance on the Watergate story. "I'm very angry with myself

about it," he says. "Having gotten a small part of the story at the beginning, I'm angry with myself for not having worked harder at bringing it out. This was a case where I think a beat man at the White House could have done more. Limited access was a problem, but a lot more could have been done. You make calls, and you call back, but too often your persistence gets worn down. It's true we didn't see the President that much, but I fault my own performance because the few times we did see him he was not confronted with the major questions Watergate raised; certainly not often enough to elicit a response or an indication of what he knew. In the campaign, I didn't press enough to get a microphone in front of him and ask him, 'What about this?' Frankly, I think it would have been a service to him, if what he says about Watergate is true."

For those who have heard and have believed the characterization of the White House press corps as kept members of the establishment, its tough, probing—some might even say insulting—interrogation of the President on August 22 must have come as a surprise. A veteran of the Washington scene, former *Newsweek* columnist Kenneth Crawford, cast the White House regulars as a bunch of bullies who seemed to forget to whom they were talking. Presidential press secretary Ronald Ziegler believes reporters "crossed the line a little bit, from aggressiveness to belligerence." Was the press corps' performance an aberration, a one-time spilling-out of months of frustration, after which the President's traveling companions would slip back into

President Nixon and
the press corps
in San Clemente



Wide World Photos

obsequious slumber, giving him a free ride again as long as they could go along, eating and drinking well on the way?

To assess even the validity of such a question, one must separate the reality of the White House beat from its appearance. To many, the beat seems the most glamorous, and therefore the most desirable, in Washington. According to the stereotype, White House reporters are the kings and queens of their trade, both in talent and prestige; their life is a succession of intimate meetings with the famous and the powerful, and a constant round of travel to exotic places. Yet, those who know a bit more about the beat see the White House press corps as a collection of glorified police reporters, sentenced to what amounts to a death watch: they hang out at the world's fanciest police press room, sopping up reports like those from a police blotter, issued by a press secretary who has no more freedom to volunteer inside information than a desk sergeant.

The truth, of course, lies somewhere in between. And to the extent that the White House beat is not all it should be, both the White House and the news organizations that station reporters there must share the blame. White House reporters do live and travel first class, and do go to interesting places. But they do so at such a frenetic pace, punctuated with so many periods of isolation and boredom, that the thrill soon vanishes. Traveling "with" the President is one of the great deceptions of American journalism. When the President travels in this country, the press tags along in buses often so far back in the motorcade that the reporters never see him. They must judge crowd reaction by the faces outside the bus window, faces that have long since summoned and discharged their enthusiasm. A radio communications system links the press pool car to the press buses; a pool reporter who can see the President gives his colleagues in the buses a play-by-play account of what is happening. From this report, correspondents (whose news organizations pay thousands of dollars for their transportation) must conjure up the images they set down in their supposedly eyewitness accounts. It's like covering a baseball game by listening to the radio, and about as glamorous.

In travels at home and abroad, the press usually

must leave before the President departs—only a few pool reporters go with him on *Air Force One*—in order to be on the ground when he arrives. The press usually stays in hotels removed not only from the President, but also from his chief staff aides. When Mr. Nixon goes to Key Biscayne, the press is quartered six miles away at the Four Ambassadors Hotel in Miami; when he goes to San Clemente, the press stays at the Surf and Sand Motel 15 miles away. At each place, White House press passes are, as Ronald Ziegler might say, inoperative for admittance to the presidential grounds. When the President or an aide wants to say something to the press, reporters are carted out by bus; after the controlled audience, they are whisked back to their distant quarters.

When President Nixon sought at his August 22 press conference to defend the approach to the Pentagon Papers judge, he observed that he had "met him for perhaps one minute outside my door here in full view of all the White House staff and everybody else who wanted to see." The viewing public could not have been blamed if they gleaned from that a picture of reporters lolling about eyeballing and filming whoever went in and out of the President's office. In truth, no reporter could have been within 15 miles of the scene, unless by the rarest chance he had been cleared into the compound for an interview with a staff aide, an uncommon occurrence in the Nixon White House—East, South, or West.

Don Bacon, White House correspondent since 1968 for the Newhouse News Service (Newhouse Newspapers), calls San Clemente "a closed fortress." The only concession made to the press either at San Clemente or Key Biscayne, he says, is a special phone in the press room. "You can ask to speak to Henry Kissinger," Bacon says, "but you never get him." Some reporters on Florida trips have taken to booking themselves into the Key Biscayne Hotel or the Sonesta Beach Hotel, where the presidential staff stays, in the hope of encountering an aide at poolside or in the bar. But the hoped-for encounters seldom occur.

In Washington, the same fortress mentality rules. For years before the Nixon regime, reporters were quartered in the West Wing lobby of the White House, there to lounge and observe the

comings and goings of White House visitors and thereby sometimes cull a hint of presidential business. (President Johnson, to dress up the lobby and possibly to court the White House press corps, had the whole room refurnished with green leather sofas and chairs. After seeing the new decor, Eddie Folliard, retired but revered White House correspondent of the *Washington Post*, commented: "I'll buy a drink, but I'm not going upstairs.") When President Nixon took office, he covered the White House swimming pool adjacent to the West Wing and converted the area into a posh waiting and briefing room for the press. "The move," says Bacon, "was by way of further isolating us. It wasn't to give us better quarters. It was to get us out of the line of fire." Most of the time the White House press room is a kind of Noel Coward version of Ben Hecht's *The Front Page*. The bodies languish and the voices wisecrack in the same fashion, without perceptibly more elegance.

In earlier days, a reporter could roam through the Executive Office Building, across from the White House, and drop in on offices of White House aides, sometimes finding a good story, otherwise cementing relationships and establishing news sources. President Johnson was the first to make press identification a requirement for admission to the building.

In the Nixon administration, a reporter must call anyone he wants to see, either in the White House or the Executive Office Building, to ask for an appointment. If the source doesn't wish to talk to him, he simply doesn't call back, and the reporter waits like a character at the other end of the line in a Kafka novel, wondering what's going on. If, like a character from Kafka, he conjures up fantasies that are far from the mark, it is perhaps understandable. Coverage of the President, too, has increasingly been confined to the pool mechanism. Whether at home or on the road, most White House reporters rarely see the President, even more rarely do they hear his voice directly, and hardly ever do they speak with him.

Since the White House departure of H. R. Halderman and John Ehrlichman and the arrival of old-time Washington hands like Melvin Laird and Bryce Harlow, veteran White House correspondents like Carroll Kilpatrick of the *Washington*

Post and Ted Knap of the *Scripps-Howard News-papers* testify that there has been a marked improvement in accessibility to ranking presidential aides. But the aides' access to the President has itself been so limited that interviews with them aren't as productive as they might be.

For all these reasons, many of Washington's best and most veteran reporters say they would not accept assignment to the White House. But the limitations of the White House beat are dictated only in part by administration strictures. The mandate given most reporters by their news organizations—to cover all developments at the White House, especially the movements of the President, process all the handouts, go to all the briefings—is anachronistic; this news policy probably more than any other factor mires the White House reporter in routine. The wire services have long since demonstrated that they are thoroughly qualified to handle the routine fare of White House news. Frank Cormier, Frances Lewine and Gaylord Shaw of the *Associated Press* and Helen Thomas and Gene Risher of *United Press International* are all fast, informed and professional reporters. Yet, very few news organizations have been willing to rely on the wire services, freeing their White House reporters from straight news requirements to do analytical and enterprise reporting. Some newspapers still demonstrate a bush-league complex by parading their staff bylines on routine White House stories. It is not only an expensive and unnecessary habit; it expends the valuable time, energy and enthusiasm of the reporters. It is notable that many who were White House reporters when Mr. Nixon entered the White House have transferred elsewhere because they grew bored or stale.

Among the most outspoken critics of the way most news organizations cover the White House is Clark R. Mollenhoff, Washington bureau chief of the *Des Moines Register and Tribune* and himself a former aide to President Nixon. Too often, he says, the White House beat has been used as an "ego-builder" for a reporter, because it is a place where spot news is served up every day that usually gets the reporter on page one. "Most people who want to work around this town," he says, "don't want to go over there because it's a lazy man's job. You can waste more time sitting there in the West

Wing of the White House when you could be doing things of value."

Mollenhoff exempts the wire-service reporters from this criticism, because processing the daily flow of spot news is their prime business, and he says that in recent months there has been "a good deal more aggressiveness" on the part of the regulars. "But when you assign a man and insist he's down there every day attending the briefings," he says, "you make him into nothing but a police reporter."

Peter Lisagor, Washington bureau chief of the *Chicago Daily News*, calls the White House beat "one of the most misunderstood press operations in town." The beat men, he says, "have a function to play, to sit there and take what they get and shovel it out, especially the wire services. There are patsies among them and there are some pretty tough reporters. But when a newspaper invests the kind of money it costs to staff the White House, it wants its reporter's name on White House stories."

"It wears you down after a while," says Don Bacon, one of those who has stuck it out. "It's the *déjà vu* business, and it's more telling on those who have to cover the beat on a spot news basis, those who have to handle handouts and have no leeway to comment."

Bacon, who works for what is considered to be a supplementary news service, is one of those with leeway. Others include the television network men, Fred Zimmerman of the *Wall Street Journal*, Ted Knap, Raymond W. Apple of the *New York Times* and Adam Clymer of the *Baltimore Sun*. Osborne does analysis and commentary exclusively. The major newspapers, like the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Star-News*, either two-platoon the White House, one reporter doing the spot news and the other writing background and enterprise pieces, or periodically assign outside reporters to dig into the White House bag, free of routine coverage responsibilities. It is a growing trend, but in the view of many White House reporters it is not growing fast enough, and for this reason mainly: White House coverage is more stilted than it has to be. As more power has been concentrated in the White House—as it most pronouncedly was in pre-Watergate days—one would have thought there would have been

more double and triple coverage of the White House. The *New York Times* continued its practice of having two full-time men, and the *Washington Post* initiated a team concept with three men working in support of Kilpatrick. But few others so responded.

White House regulars are sensitive to the criticism that they sit around all day waiting to be spoon-fed. "The fact is, a lot of straight news happens that must be covered," Bacon says. "You have to attend the briefings. The morning briefing is supposed to start at 10:30 or 11 but sometimes it's not over until 1 or 2 in the afternoon. Then you have to write your story and there's not that much time left to do enterprise. When you do have time, you can call a source, talk to some secretary and try to sweet-talk her into getting your message through. It's the same everywhere in government, but much more so here."

Some of the best reporters in Washington are on the White House beat, because they know they are at the seat of power and they know what the beat could be if the President, and in many cases their own editors, permitted them to function as they need to. If they are really to inform the public, not only about what the President has for breakfast, but also about what he does thereafter that has important effects on the country and the world, they must be unshackled from the police-beat schedule and mentality. In some cases, this may require doubling up or taking old men off the beat and putting new men on. A commitment by the President and by American editors to open the White House and the press corps to more searching reporting in depth could work as a major inducement to those outstanding reporters in Washington who now look down their noses at the White House beat. It could loosen up the White House bureaucracy, which should have learned from the Watergate experience that closed government, while temporarily safe from prying press eyes, often carries the seeds of its own destruction. Such a commitment to openness by the President and by editors who oversee Washington bureaus could convert the professionally frustrated—if socially secure—White House press corps into a hard-driving group of journalistic free-enterprisers. Some already are. Others long to be.



Wide World Photos

Newspapers: learning (too slowly) to adapt to TV

A study of newspapers shows that most are not offering the analysis and interpretation needed to supplement live TV coverage.

BEN H. BAGDIKIAN

■ Stanley Karnow, one of the country's leading journalists on foreign affairs, is only 48 years old, but when it comes to American television he's Rip van Winkle, suddenly awake to a massive change in his native land. He left the country after graduating from Harvard in 1947, at which time there were only 16,000 television sets in the entire United States. He was abroad almost continuously for 25 years thereafter—for *Time* magazine, for the *Saturday Evening Post*, for the *Washington Post*—a period when television was saturating American households. During his expatriation, Karnow never saw a national political convention;

he read about them in the *Paris Herald Tribune*, the mailed editions of the *New York Times* and the newsmagazines. In 1971 Karnow returned to Washington and the following year saw his first television convention session. The next morning he walked into the *Post* newsroom and told a colleague, "I just had a crazy experience. I saw the convention on television for the first time in my life. It's incredible; for the first time I didn't have to read the morning paper."

Karnow, now resigned from the *Post* and writing books and magazine articles, says, "I guess it was old stuff to everyone else, but for me it was a completely new experience. Now I find myself attracted to sidebars and analysis in the papers if they're any good. But I don't need the paper any longer to tell me what happened."

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The first round of Watergate hearings should have been a similar awakening for many other people: when television completely covers a visible event, it changes the function of printed journalism—from the traditional announcement that something has happened (which, of course, is still needed) to the added task of *explaining* the event.

The impact of television on news has been creeping into print consciousness for a long time. It was preceded by radio's killing of the "Extra" edition. Even the start of World War II did not prompt many publishers to order an "Extra," because broadcasters had already carried the message, with the familiar preface: "We interrupt this program." The biggest visible news breaks in the 1950's and 1960's became known before the papers could hit the street. When President Kennedy was shot in Dallas in 1963, 44 per cent of the American population knew it within 15 minutes, 62 per cent within 30 minutes and 90 per cent within an hour, according to studies made by communications professor Bradley Greenberg.

This new fact of journalistic life has dawned on many readers, but Watergate demonstrated that many newspaper editors still don't take it seriously. A study of 20 U.S. afternoon dailies shows (if this random selection is representative) that most papers approach a completely televised event as though readers know nothing about it, and, worse, as though readers don't *need* to know more than the eyewitness details seen on TV.

Some papers studied, usually the largest ones, did try to tell readers what they might wish to know *because* they had seen the hearings. But most papers did not. Most of the papers carried only straight news accounts, with no analysis or background.

There may be unjustified complacency within the printed journalism field. After all, 62 million papers continue to be sold every day. And the extensive televising of Watergate could be dismissed as a unique event. Yet the ultimate significance of the television coverage for printed journalism was far greater. It provided an example of what may happen to printed journalism when a technical development—cable television—takes hold in coming years. Unless most of the projections about cable are wrong, within ten years the home viewer

will routinely have access to video coverage of Congressional hearings, state legislatures, city councils, school and zoning boards—all of which are now staples of print journalism.

The latest figures show 7 million homes—11 per cent of all TV homes—are already connected to cable. Projections are that by 1980 or shortly thereafter practically all urban and suburban homes will be so connected. The FCC has told cable operators to include at least 20 channel connections to each home and to reserve channels for public access and for government activities. Within five years there will be 20 channel systems in the top 100 television markets, which include 87 per cent of all television—and newspaper—households. Some current systems provide 40 channels, and a few have 62 channels. The spectacular audience for TV coverage of Watergate was a dramatic omen for print editors.

There wasn't much excuse for editors to miss the point. TV's success was symbolized by the page one banner headline in *Variety*, the show-biz paper, for August 8: ERVIN & CO. SOAKING THE SOAPS. Translation: the weekly ratings by A. C. Nielsen of the daytime programs on commercial networks for the week July 9 to 13 showed that Sen. Sam Ervin's Watergate hearings had more viewers than the soap operas, the most popular daytime programs. That week the witnesses were John Mitchell, former Attorney General and former director of the 1972 Nixon campaign, and Richard Moore, White House legal tactician.

At the start of the hearings, when the minor spear-carriers were testifying, all the networks carried each session. The morning ratings for each network then averaged 7.0, which meant 4,500,000 television homes (and about that same number of adults) were tuned to each of the three networks. In the afternoon, about 5,200,000 adults per network seemed to be watching.

As of June 6 (witness: Hugh W. Sloan, Jr., former treasurer of the Committee to Re-elect the President), most sessions were carried by one network only; the afternoon sessions averaged ratings of 9.0 or 6 million adults and 700,000 teen-agers.

These figures do not include the early evening network news shows, which broadcast key portions of the testimony (as President Nixon bitterly ob-

served). The networks claim their early evening newscasts reach 23,770,000 television homes in almost all of the nation's 209 markets, for a possible total adult audience of 50,000,000. Nielsen says that network news reaches 81 million adults sometime during each week. In a 1965 study, NBC claimed that radio news reached approximately 92 million adults each day.

To all of this must be added the extraordinary experience of public television with Watergate. Watergate was probably the most important thing that has happened to noncommercial public affairs reporting since its founding. The hearings established public television as a realistic alternative to commercial broadcasting in the minds of an important new audience.

At first some of the 237 affiliates of public TV did not carry the nightly replay of the day's hearings, but soon 92 per cent were broadcasting them. The reluctant stations no doubt recalled the administration's criticism of public television; their controlling boards include local establishment types reluctant to lend their facilities to embarrassing national news (as the White House knew when it kept pushing for strictly local, non-network public television). But the non-carrying affiliates were soon deluged with demands to carry the hearings, and most acceded. In the first two weeks of Watergate coverage, the public network asked for letters of comment; it received 75,000 letters (98 per cent approving), and then had to rescind its request because staff members couldn't handle the flood of correspondence.

The ratings for public television in the evening are usually less than 1 per cent (1 per cent means 650,000 homes or about 1,300,000 evening viewers). During Watergate, ratings tripled and quadrupled. For example, on May 23 (witnesses: John J. Caulfield, former New York policeman, then an assistant director for criminal enforcement in the Department of the Treasury; Anthony T. Ulasewicz, another former New York policeman, then aide to Caulfield, and hearing comic; and Gerald Alch, former attorney for plumber activist James W. McCord, Jr.) the average of ratings for eight U.S. cities surveyed was 3.1. If that average held for all affiliates, the public television audience could have totalled at least 4 million viewers. By

August 1 (witness: H. R. Haldeman, former White House chief of staff) one public television affiliate alone, WNET in New York City, had a 7.6 rating, the highest it ever garnered and one that could have meant a million viewers in that metropolitan area alone.

James Karayn, president of the National Public Affairs Center for Television (NPACT), says Watergate gave local affiliates confidence in running controversial public affairs. It showed that programs could reach beyond the highbrow viewers. It also brought in \$1,500,000 in donations, two-thirds of the donors saying that this was the first time they had ever watched non-commercial television.

Curiously, while television is always quick to announce a triumph over printed news (and vice versa), commercial network executives had mixed emotions about their Watergate success. They kept reminding everyone in sight that each network was suffering losses of at least \$100,000 per day of Watergate coverage. As *Variety* said in its lead story about the spectacular audience: "Television has a

The Ratings

Following are the A. C. Nielsen average audience figures for the top ten sponsored daytime TV programs during the week of July 9 to 13.

	Rating ¹	Share ²
Watergate (NBC)	10.7	37
<i>Let's Make a Deal</i>	10.0	34
Watergate (ABC)	9.6	33
<i>Split Second</i>	9.5	33
<i>Newlywed Game</i>	9.4	32
<i>Girl in My Life</i>	9.4	32
<i>As the World Turns</i>	9.2	31
Watergate (CBS)	9.1	34
<i>All My Children</i>	9.1	32
<i>Days of Our Lives</i>	8.8	29

1. The "rating" is the percentage of total existing TV households (65 million) tuned to a particular program.
2. The "share" is the percentage of turned-on sets that are tuned to a particular network at a specific time. (Because, among other factors, many households have more than one set, "share" is considered the more pertinent competitive figure.)

new smash hit, but for the first time ever the industry was too stunned and embarrassed to drum it up. In fact, there's little doubt that the vast majority of network and stations execs wish it would go away."

Yet, it didn't go away. Millions of people are addicted to the daytime serials, and the networks were not happy to think that, after Watergate, the addicts might kick the habit. After all, Sam Ervin would be center stage for only a few months, but Procter & Gamble is on camera forever.

The Newspaper Advertising Bureau claims that 77 per cent of U.S. adults (18 and over) read—or skim—at least one newspaper per day. If the claim is accurate, more than 100 million people see a daily paper—more than the 81 million people (18 and over) who see network news sometime during the week, according to Nielsen, or the 50 million who may watch each evening.

Whatever the total audience figures for television news—30 or 50 or 80 million people—or for the Watergate hearings in full—10 or 15 or 20 million—the fact remains that, before the next day's paper came out, most people interested in the news knew the essential facts. But this apparently mattered little to most newspaper editors.

A sample of 20 dailies was selected to see how many gave their readers only straight news on Watergate and how many added analysis, background, interpretation or other explanatory material designed to help the reader better understand the complex developments.

The sample was weighted in favor of finding more sophisticated coverage. First, the study was restricted to afternoon papers (including a few all-day papers). Since these papers go to press early in the day, they plan overnight pieces that almost inevitably tend to be interpretive or to provide background information. Only the larger papers were examined, further weighting the sample toward those papers most likely to have local talent for interpretation and insight in writing and editing. There are 1,441 afternoon papers in the country but only 324 with circulations of 25,000 or more; it was from these larger papers that every tenth was selected. The *Standard Rate and Data* listing of afternoon papers by size was used, and where the tenth paper was not available for scrutiny in the

Library of Congress collection, the next larger paper in the collection was chosen.

A period of 12 days during the hearings, July 17 through July 28, was selected for study; most of the afternoon papers did not have Sunday editions, so 11 editions were available for most of the 20 papers. Among the possible total of 220, only 5 editions were missing from the Library's collection.

The results are not reassuring if you assume readers need to know not just *what* happened, but also *why* it happened, what it may mean and how it affects citizens. Most newspapers failed to do precisely what print can do best: provide thoughtful, analytical discussion about the significance of events. Some papers were simply silly as they tried to present something beyond televised Watergate, relying on bizarre features typical of the elder Hearst. Others settled for the extra dimensions offered by syndicated columnists (editorials and regular columnists weren't counted in this study).

Generally, the five biggest dailies in the sample (*Detroit News*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *Buffalo Evening News*, *Minneapolis Star*, and *Sacramento Bee*) did well by their readers. Among them, 37 issues included analytical or interpretive pieces; only 17 did not. They presented a total of 262 columns of straight news on Watergate compared to 104 columns of analysis and background.

The next five in size (*Indianapolis News*, *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram*, *Grand Rapids Press*, *Flint Journal*, and *Youngstown Vindicator*) did less well as a group: 30 issues with analysis and 21 without, and 182 columns of straight news compared to 48 columns of analysis.

The next five in size (*Ft. Wayne News-Sentinel*, *Jacksonville Journal*, *Manchester Union Leader*, *Wilkes-Barre Times-Leader-News Record*, and *Erie Daily Times*) did less well than the second group. They had 18 issues with analysis, 34 without; 121 columns of straight news and only 28 columns of analysis.

The smallest five papers (*Lincoln Evening Journal*, *St. Joseph News-Press*, *Waterbury American*, *Montgomery Alabama Journal*, and *Tampa Times*) perhaps did slightly better: 22 issues with analysis and 32 without; 118 columns of straight news and 31 columns of analysis.

In general, the larger papers did better, both in

total amounts of analysis and background, which might be expected of fatter papers, but also in the proportion of analysis to news. The largest five papers averaged one column of analysis for every two and one-half columns of straight news; the smallest five, one column of analysis for every four columns of straight news. Since the sample omitted papers smaller than 25,000 in circulation, it can be imagined how little analysis was presented by the 1,248 papers under 25,000, which are 70 per cent of all dailies, or the 1,117 afternoon papers, which are 77 per cent of all PM's. While these papers represent only 20 per cent of the total U.S. daily circulation, they are usually the only papers in their communities. Thus, if Watergate is any measure, something like two-thirds of all newspaper communities probably get negligible amounts of interpretation or background information with their news.

There were some happy exceptions among the smaller papers. The *Tampa Times*, for example, presented analysis on 7 of the 10 days the paper was examined, with almost a third of its Watergate space devoted to interpretive and background pieces. This performance was better than that of the *Minneapolis Star*, except that the *Star*, a larger paper in size, had more columns of straight news on the hearings.

Among the ten larger papers, the tenth, the *Youngstown Vindicator*, had eight issues with analysis and only three without, better than most other papers in this category.

The quality of the analyses and interpretive pieces varied greatly, of course, but in general it seemed to parallel the *quantity* of such material offered by the paper. It seems fair to assume that, if a paper devotes a generous portion of its space to analytical pieces, the paper takes the subject seriously enough to write or select pieces carefully.

There was no scarcity of interpretive and background pieces available to editors. Notable as sources were the *New York Times* news service and the *Los Angeles Times-Washington Post* news wire; although both standard wire services filed background pieces regularly, the quality was usually not up to that of the supplementary services.

The *Detroit News*, while tending to be conservative in its analyses, did offer a variety, carrying

Washington Post background stories as well as pieces by James Burnham of the *National Review*. It ran one Op-Ed essay (distributed by the *New York Times* service) written by Richard Nixon when he was admitted to the New York bar, and another, which appeared in a number of other papers, by Nick Thimmesch criticizing the *Washington Post* for alleged "McCarthyism."

The *Minneapolis Star*, while providing a smaller quantity of analysis, did try some imaginative approaches. It published excerpts from George Orwell's *1984*, along with editorial-page staff pieces under a standing head, JUDGING THE LAW. Subjects included executive privilege and other legal issues that arose in the daily hearings.

The *Indianapolis News* ran the Thimmesch piece—and, for 4 days, a series of articles on Martha Mitchell, headlined THE MOUTH THAT ROARED.

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* was the heaviest of all the afternoon papers in analysis, both in frequency (10 out of 12 issues) and in space (37 columns, far more than any other paper in the sample). It began an inside section with the title "News Analysis" and ran several useful interpretive pieces there and elsewhere. It was notable for having staff capability to produce such pieces. It also used its syndicated services; for example, a piece on the Harding scandals that was distributed by Editorial Research Reports.

The *Manchester Union Leader* had the worst record of all 20 papers in number of days and amount of space for non-editorial analytical pieces. For purposes of this study, a story presenting itself as straight news was counted as such, which caused some problems in studying the *Union Leader*. The *Manchester* paper is usually awkward to categorize in terms of analysis, interpretation and news, since its publisher, William Loeb, has passions that run through them all. His page-one editorials, while not counted as analysis, do spread a certain tone to the rest of the news around them. For example, when someone falsely representing himself as Treasury Secretary George Shultz phoned Sen. Ervin to say the presidential tapes would be delivered to the committee, Loeb ran a page-one editorial with the headline: HOAXTER BEATS HUCKSTER. It was an attack on Sen. Ervin, in which Loeb called the committee's chairman

"Senator Claghorn Ervin" and said, "Anyone that stupid has no business being a U.S. Senator!"

(It was the Manchester *Union Leader* that first carried, during the 1972 primaries, the hoax letter accusing Sen. Edmund Muskie of making a derogatory reference to French-Canadians as "Canucks." Since the *Union Leader* made so much of the letter without confirming its authenticity or even the existence of the letter-signer, an unkind observer might have remarked that anyone that stupid has no business being a newspaper publisher.)

The Wilkes-Barre paper on July 18 ran an analytical piece saying that the Nixon wiretaps were *not* a violation of the law, while the Manchester paper on the previous day had run a headline stating: FCC SPOKESMAN SAYS PHONETAPS WERE ILLEGAL. As the contradiction illustrates, interpretive pieces do give play to differences of interpretation. That is inevitably the strength and the danger of interpretive journalism. Different views do illuminate events more fully, but the danger of doctrinaire presentations exists because so many papers are local monopolies. Unless editors vary the analytic viewpoints they print, local readers may get stuck with one narrow analysis.

The prize for Background Shlock must go to the Ft. Wayne *News-Sentinel*. On July 21, the day after testimony by Robert C. Mardian, the former head of the internal security division of the Department of Justice and a major CRP aide, and by Gordon Strachan, a former assistant to H. R. Haldeman, the *News-Sentinel* carried no straight news on Watergate at all; it did, however, run a banner across the top of page one—in blue ink—referring to Jeanne Dixon, the syndicated fortune teller: SEER SAYS NIXON TO SURVIVE WATERGATE. On the same day, the paper carried an interview with Robert Welch, head of the John Birch Society, playing up Welch's assertion that Nelson Rockefeller planned Watergate and that Richard Nixon wanted to be the first President of the World.

This proves, if anything, that there is a continuing need for straight news in print. It suggests that too many editors still underestimate their readers. It also indicates that producing good analysis and interpretation demands higher standards for editors and reporters, standards of intellectual discipline, honesty and knowledge in depth.

Analysis need not terrify editors who fear that reporters' personal judgments will leak into the paper. A great deal of the need can be met by logically arranging information—including previously reported information—to help readers understand what is at issue.

For example, one puzzle of Watergate was conflicting testimony, which most papers merely labeled as conflicting. Yet there was much they could have done—as did the newsmagazines and a few dailies—to clarify the contradictions.

The July 19 testimony of Robert Mardian offered an ideal occasion for telling readers, in factual terms, who was contradicting whom on what events. One could, after a time, list the major contradictions: Did the then Attorney General, John Mitchell, approve of the Watergate burglary and its budget? Did he participate in the attempt to use the CIA as a cover? Did he order the destruction of the "Gemstone" bugging files?

In his testimony, Mardian contradicted his former friend and superior, Mitchell, on a number of points. He differed with Frederick C. LaRue, former aide at CRP, who had preceded him on the stand; he contradicted John Dean, who said Mardian had received FBI reports on its Watergate investigation; and he disputed testimony of Maurice Stans that Mardian was involved in concealing some campaign funds.

It would have been helpful, for example, merely to juxtapose conflicts in testimony. Jeb Stuart Magruder, former deputy director of CRP, swore before the committee on June 14:

"Mr. Mitchell flew back that Monday [two days after the Watergate burglary] with Mr. LaRue and Mr. Mardian. We met in his apartment with Mr. Dean, Mr. Mardian and myself. . . . One solution was recommended in which I was to, of course, destroy the Gemstone file. . . . It was generally concluded that that file should be immediately destroyed."

LaRue, July 19: "As I remember, there was a response from Mr. Mitchell that it might be a good idea if Mr. Magruder had a fire."

Mardian, July 19: "No such discussion took place in my presence."

A similar context could have been provided for Dean's earlier testimony: ". . . I reported at one

point in time to Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Mardian [prompting] Mr. Mardian, as I recall, to suggest that the CIA might be of some assistance in providing support."

Mardian: "I do not recall that conversation."

The presidential taping of telephone and other conversations in his various offices raised questions of propriety, wisdom and legality. The wire services moved stories on the legal question, but the stories were usually ambiguous and led to differing headlines in different papers. What was needed was background on the law, the FCC regulations, the telephone company's rules and court precedents on tapping, eavesdropping and other kinds of surveillance.

Few papers made clear, for example, that while it is legal for one party to a two-party telephone conversation to tape the conversation, there are two ways to do it and that the White House, whichever way it did it, violated the rules. One device for recording a conversation is an induction coil, usually a suction cup on the telephone, requiring no direct wired connection to telephone lines. This is a violation of American Telephone and Telegraph company regulations, which are part of its tariff filed with the Federal Communications Commission; thus, the FCC requires the telephone company to terminate service on any telephone which uses such a device. If the recording is made by a direct wire connection—as apparently in the White House—this, too, is subject to AT&T Tariff No. 263, which requires that a tone be emitted every 15 seconds during the taping. Even the connecting device, the black box with the tone in it, cannot be installed without telephone company approval. The company must terminate service to any phone user who persists in violating the rule (a rule insisted upon by the FCC in 1948). These rules apply to all interstate calls and most localities, including the District of Columbia. It would have been news to thousands of people who use induction coils that they are risking loss of telephone service.

Or, to take another example, few papers considered the difference between executive privilege—the right to maintain secrecy for presidential conversations with aides—and separation of powers—the requirement that the executive, judicial and

legislative branches of government do not encroach upon one another.

During the studied period, John Ehrlichman testified that J. Edgar Hoover had refused to approve of the plan proposed by presidential aide Tom Huston for gathering intelligence by conducting burglaries, eavesdropping, infiltration and other activities. It was one of several opportunities for papers to bring up some previously reported—and relevant—facts. Instead, Hoover's refusal to approve the Huston plan was praised, and it was suggested that Hoover was either a civil libertarian, or a stickler for following the rules. Yet in 1971, the FBI offices in Media, Pa., were burglarized by a political group that mailed memoranda from the files to various newspapers. The memoranda and reports were authenticated. They showed that Hoover had for years been ordering the FBI to do exactly the things included in the Huston plan. Yet, when Hoover's action became an issue during the Watergate hearings, the press failed in one of its major obligations to its readers—to have a memory.

Papers can also do some inquiring of their own to follow up on testimony. It seemed to pass unnoticed that the Marine Commandant, Gen. Robert E. Cushman, former deputy director of the CIA, testified that he had been liaison man for Richard Nixon when Nixon was vice president, advising him, among other matters, on the early stages of preparation for the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba by the CIA. At that time, Cushman knew E. Howard Hunt, then deeply involved in the CIA invasion preparations, and later chief adventurer of the White House plumbers. Did Vice President Nixon also know Hunt during the 1950's? And if so, could that have contributed to Hunt's involvement in the plumbers' group? Could that tell us anything about presidential prior knowledge?

Unfortunately, no one on the committee asked about the Nixon-Cushman-Hunt relationship in the 1950's. Neither, apparently, did the press.

When the White House spoke bitterly about the prejudicial effect of the hearings and their coverage, leading to public condemnation in the absence of a legal trial, the press, by way of adding a larger context to such complaints, might have recalled Mr. Nixon's pre-trial condemnations of

Charles Manson and Angela Davis, J. Edgar Hoover's pre-trial condemnations of the Berrigan brothers, even Spiro Agnew's broadsides aimed at whole classes of people. In their anger, apparently, White House officials forgot that Constitutional rights apply to out-groups as well as in-groups.

Where papers cannot do original reporting—like interviewing Gen. Cushman or checking archives that might show past personal connections—they can, sometimes with just a telephone call, consult academic authorities on such matters as separation of powers, executive privilege, privacy in telephone communications, and Fourth Amendment protection against search and seizure. Few papers, even very small ones, lack nearby libraries and academic centers that might help in discussing basic Consti-

tutional, legal and historical questions.

Even without television and the prospect of cable, there is a need for more analytical and interpretive writing in newspapers. And, if cable broadcasts of every important national and local hearing will be available to concerned citizens within a decade, then newspapers should worry now about what they will be saying to readers the day after. There is always a great deal to be said, as a few papers demonstrated during Watergate. But to say it, papers will need to appreciate what is happening to news technology and the political intelligence of citizens, and they will need to cultivate journalists who are knowledgeable and perceptive enough to have something useful to say about what the public has seen and heard.

Correction

Due to typographical errors, a chart printed in the September/October issue of CJR contained some incorrect figures. Following are the correct figures, accompanying the article "All News Radio" by Ron Powers and Jerrold Oppenheim.

Number of stories in each category during a randomly selected weekday hour of morning drive-time newsradio (6:30 to 9 a.m.):

	KCBS SF CBS	KFWB LA W	WTOP DC Post	WAVA DC
NEWS CATEGORY				
State and local	17	11	6	20
National	10	9	18	18
International	3	14	10	6
Sports (segments)	2	2	4	3
Business	6	0	2	0
Service ¹	5	4	8	7
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	43	40	48	54
NEWS VS. FEATURE				
Hard news	40	35	43	50
Analysis, comment	0	5	0	2
News feature	2	1	5	2
Non-news fluff	1	0	0	0
STATION VS. POOLS				
Enterprise	0	0	1	0
Wires and staff	32	32	31	48
Syndicated	4	0	1	6
Network/group	7	8	15	NA
Other	0	0	0	0
OTHER FACTS				
Public service announcements	0	2	0	0
Ads	22	13	16	18
Actuality ²	8	4	1	2
Correspondents on air ³	2	4	0	4
Announcer-read ads	½	0	¾	few
Women on air	0	0	0	0
Duplicate stories ⁴	4	1	2	2

1) Traffic, weather, trains; excludes headlines, time-and-temp. reports.

2) Excludes network/group coverage.

3) Excludes network/group coverage and business reports.

4) Excluding service, sports (both highly repetitive).

Televised hearings: the impact out there

KURT AND GLADYS ENGEL LANG

It is difficult, but possible, to rouse the "sleeping giant" of public opinion.

■ Over the years, a kind of folklore has grown up which argues that massive shifts in public opinion take place as a result of television spectacles, such as the Watergate hearings. Such a myth assumes that somewhere "out there," where the television picture ends up, lies a sleeping giant which, when roused, can be galvanized into action. Opinions change, action results (the theory continues) because a concerned audience absorbs the evidence and arrives at conclusions. There is the faith, shared by some senators on the Watergate panel, that thoughtful evaluation of the Watergate information will cause change. For example, our aroused sleeping giant will rethink the electoral process and will begin to question why such massive sums of money are needed to run a modern political campaign. He will also wonder about the kind of personal commitment to a candidate's election that causes breaking and entering, bugging, and "dirty tricks." As the hearings progress, this public will begin to express concern about the infringement on civil liberties that the investigations reveal. And perhaps, a thorough re-examination will begin of the kind of power that has been delegated to or usurped by the modern presidency.

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Unfortunately, communications research generally shows that such hopes are very optimistic. Opinions change—but seldom that quickly or profoundly. Television is powerful—but coverage of any one event rarely produces sweeping transformations. The evidence now available indicates that Watergate is one of those rare events that has the power to stir the sleeping giant, to cause people to react—at least to the extent of changing some opinions. But the evidence at hand also indicates that the gavel-to-gavel TV coverage of the hearings played only a supplemental role—perhaps hastening shifts in the public mood that began before the hearings. Phase one TV coverage had far less effect on public opinion than the totality of Watergate coverage over one year, was far less influential than the continuous drama of the events themselves.

The relatively rare genus of fully televised public proceedings includes, in addition to Watergate, the Kefauver crime hearings in the early 1950's and the Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954. Researchers found that the changes which occurred solely as a result of televising the latter two hearings were incremental and subtle. After the Army-McCarthy hearings, for example, psychologist G. D. Wiebe undertook a study to find out if, as a result of the hearings, the public would be aroused to a "ringing reaffirmation of traditional liberties, and, correspondingly, to a mass rejection of Senator McCarthy for having encroached upon those freedoms

in a bombastic and intemperate career which purported to expose Communist subversion." So Wiebe set up samples in two small cities in Maine and Kansas. The heart of Wiebe's thesis was that people would respond favorably to such statements as "it is wrong to assume guilt until innocence is proven," "it is wrong to require a man to testify against himself," "it is wrong to encroach on freedom of speech." In Wiebe's words, "The respondents did *not* talk about such values, either directly or by implication, often enough to justify reporting." Instead, Wiebe found that the hearings were seen in more personal terms, according to a kind of common sense. Wiebe found that people praised or blamed hearing participants by making such statements as "He sticks to his convictions, stands ready even if alone, in a good cause." This sort of reasoning was offered *both* by viewers who sided with McCarthy and those who sided with his opponents. Wiebe found that few on either side changed their minds as a result of viewing the hearings.

Another study by Wiebe, this on the impact of the Kefauver hearings, shows that most of those who watched were outraged by the revelations of crime and corruption. But, despite their arousal, Wiebe concluded that few viewers responded by considering pressures for legislative remedies or any other individual actions.

Our own study of the Kennedy-Nixon debates reveals that only very subtle changes followed that TV event. Most debate viewers did not, we found, try to judge who carried the day on which issue. Nor did they themselves carefully weigh the issues debated. Rather, the big effect of the debates was that people came to believe, for the first time, that Kennedy *acted* like a president, that he had a "presidential image."

Studies also show that although attentive viewers receive a good deal of new information, what they absorb is always filtered through what they already know and are capable of understanding. Our own study of the 1952 party conventions found at least two interesting mechanisms at work. Before the televised events began, we asked a sample of viewers to characterize their thoughts about what they were about to see. Some said they were about to see "backroom politics" in action; others

thought it would be a "heroic drama" played out between the principal actors or candidates; others thought they would see "representative democracy" in action while still others took a more sinister view, that everything would be settled ahead of time. (At least some viewers with this attitude were reacting to "information overload," that is, because they could not absorb the enormous amount of information which was thrown at them in a relatively short space of time, they tended to fall back on the notion that it was all settled ahead of time anyway.) In almost every case, people's views of what happened after the convention were strongly influenced by what they thought *would* happen before they watched the event. When something happened on the convention floor, it was always viewed in the context of what the viewer perceived would happen before the convention began. An even more interesting outcome of the study was the discovery that many viewers are so intimately involved with the TV picture that they tend to react spontaneously and unreflectively to what they see. They forget that what they are seeing is a highly selective picture of an event, believing instead that they are actually experiencing the event. Because we all tend to put more stock in events actually experienced, the belief that TV is authentic experience makes it possible for viewers to reinforce their prejudices while at the same time believing they have increased their political expertise.

Definitive answers about the impact of the Watergate hearings won't be available until researchers have finished current studies. But, based on some 20 studies of the first phase of the Watergate hearings with which we are acquainted—and on the nationally published polls—we can draw some tentative conclusions.

The impact of all Watergate information on public opinion has had dramatic impact. A glance at the opinion polls shows, for example, that as public awareness of Watergate grew, so the President's popularity declined. And indeed, in a study of media credibility, Prof. Alex Edelstein at the University of Washington has come up with what he calls some remarkable findings. During interviews with a sample of 600 people in June 1973, Edelstein found an unusually large number (com-

pared to previous social science studies) who said they had changed their opinions. "There was almost as much change of opinion as there was stability" between the time people first heard about Watergate and June 1973, Edelstein reports.

Based on Nielsen ratings, we know that the phase one Watergate audience exceeded all normal expectations. The best estimate of total exposure to the live daytime coverage (and evening rebroadcasts by the Public Broadcasting Service) is some 30 hours per television home. By early August, a Gallup survey revealed that close to 90 per cent of a national cross-section of the population had watched some part of the hearings. But this audience was far from a sleeping giant, a mass of unformed opinion. Long before the hearings began, the public had been forming judgments about the June 17 break-in. Even as early as September 1972, some 52 per cent had heard or read about the incident. Then, an overwhelming majority (75 per cent in a Gallup poll) labeled the break-in "mostly politics," the kind of political skulduggery common in campaigns.

But, beginning on March 23 with James McCord's letter to Judge John J. Sirica, events began to snowball. The President admitted he had been "misled" about the existence of the Watergate cover-up. John Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman resigned—as did Attorney General Richard Kleindienst—and John Dean was fired. All of these events occurred before the hearings began; in a sense, they set the stage by creating an interested audience, familiar with the names and events, and

ready now to follow the televised hearings. By mid-May, almost everyone knew about Watergate and a majority was now taking it quite seriously—that is, viewing it as more than "just politics." A Gallup poll taken between May 11 and 14 said the 96 per cent who had read or heard about Watergate represented "one of the all-time high awareness scores recorded for a major news development." So by the time the hearings began, the audience was composed largely of those who already had opinions about the Watergate affair in general and about the President's responsibility in particular.

Non-viewers (and those who watched the hearings infrequently) differed markedly from viewers—in their politics and, more significantly, in their attitudes about a citizen's relationship to government. Every study we have consulted has discovered convincing evidence that Republicans and anyone else who voted for the President in 1972 were more often non-viewers, more likely to feel that there was too much coverage of Watergate and that the hearings "weren't good for the country." Conversely, a study being conducted by David LeRoy at the Florida State University Communication Research Center found that voting for McGovern in 1972 was the best predictor of viewing.

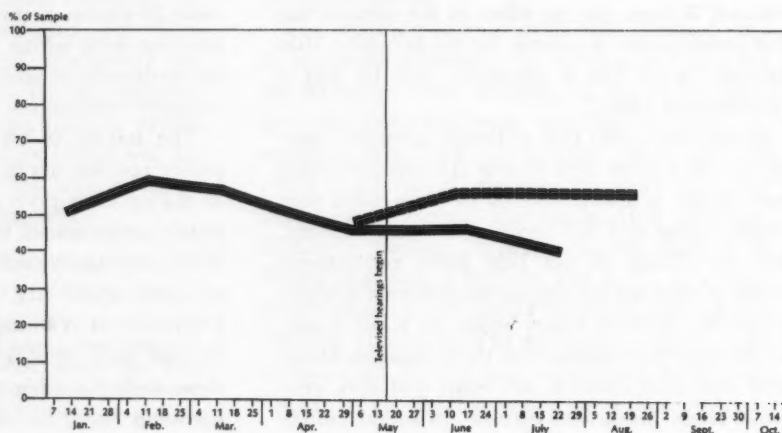
Yet, the people who didn't watch the hearings did not necessarily think the President was innocent. If he was guilty, to paraphrase presidential adviser Melvin Laird, many people apparently didn't want to hear about it. In fact, LeRoy's

Summary of published Louis Harris Poll results.

How would you rate the job
Nixon is doing as President?
% of sample answering 'excellent' or
pretty good'.

Do you feel Nixon knew about
the attempt to cover-up White
House involvement in Watergate
while it was going on, or do you
think he didn't know about the
cover-up?

% of sample who felt 'Nixon knew'.



Florida study seems to indicate that people who "never watched" the hearings were almost as likely as those who did watch to believe that the President had prior knowledge of both the break-in and the subsequent cover-up. In other words, non-viewers were a lot more likely to have voted for Nixon, but only a bit more likely than viewers to believe him innocent. A possible explanation for this seemingly contradictory attitude lies in the fact that non-viewing is also associated in general with a deep-rooted distrust of politics and politicians. Social scientists have found that such a "plague on both your houses" attitude has been endemic in American political life for some time. It's a convenient way for people to avoid uncomfortable ambiguities. Our own Watergate study in Long Island shows generalized distrust (revealed by such comments as "all politicians are corrupt" or "the only crime the Republicans committed was getting caught") to have been especially typical of non-viewers with no party identification who voted for Nixon in 1972.

Much has been made, however, of the belief that the immoral and illegal methods used by some members of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President could cause viewers to become disillusioned with the whole political process (the sleeping giant theory, again). A Harris poll taken in mid-July has been read as evidence that Watergate together with the impact of live nationwide television promoted cynicism. The poll showed that 69 per cent of the adults questioned agreed with the statement that "dirty campaign tactics

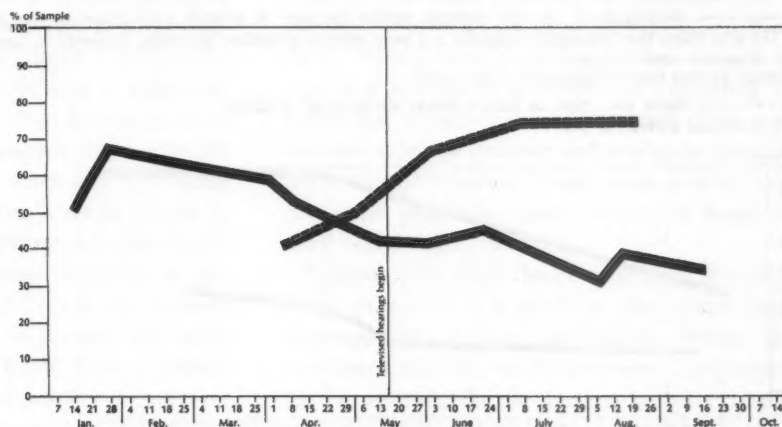
exist among Republicans and Democrats . . . (with) the Nixon campaign people no worse than the Democrats except that they got caught at it." The same question asked in June showed 64 per cent of the respondents agreed. But before clucking too loudly about the harm televised Watergate did to respect for politics in general, we should note that the magnitude of the change is not overwhelming—public cynicism about the conduct of political campaigns was already high. We should also remember that between the campaign and the start of the hearings, both Gallup and Harris polls showed marked upswings in the public's belief that Watergate was a "serious matter" rather than "just politics." Most important, as we said above, cynicism and distrust are as much a *cause* of non-viewing as a result of viewing. People who don't care about politics because they distrust it rarely show much interest in media coverage of politics. Some studies now under way of Watergate, phase one, tend to support this long-standing generalization.

If you did watch the hearings, your basic attitudes probably had a good deal more to do with how you responded to Watergate in general and to Mr. Nixon in particular than did the information presented on the tube. Sidney Kraus and his associates at Cleveland State University in their Watergate study have been focusing on "trust." They see people as trusting more in "government," or in "leaders," or in "other people." Kraus' first results show that those viewers who register a high degree of "trust in government" tend to take a

Summary of published Gallup Poll results.

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Nixon is handling his job as President?
% of sample answering 'approve'.

Did the President know about the break-in and/or the cover-up?
% of sample answering 'yes'.



more tolerant attitude toward punishing the President than those who emphasize "personal trust."

Our own modest study of students in Long Island tends to confirm Kraus' findings about trust and vindictiveness. Among viewers who voted for Nixon, the desire for punitive steps (such as impeachment) was most common among Democrats who felt personally betrayed. Again, basic attitudes had a great deal to do with shaping response to the televised hearings. Prof. Alex Edelstein's study of a community in southwestern Washington provides even more evidence for this assumption. At the end of June (after John Dean's testimony), Edelstein asked his respondents a series of questions about what they had believed when they first heard of Watergate, and what they believed as of June. While only 36 per cent said that events had confirmed all their initial beliefs, 82 per cent said they held to at least one of their first perceptions.

To say, though, that basic attitudes played a major role in shaping responses to the televised Watergate hearings is not the same thing as saying that no change in views occurred as a result of the gavel-to-gavel coverage. A glance at the opinion polls conducted between the beginning and the end of phase one shows that opinions were shifting—at least about the President's involvement. Coverage undoubtedly accelerated the decline in the President's popularity—a decline which was already in progress when the hearings began and which his August speech temporarily reversed.

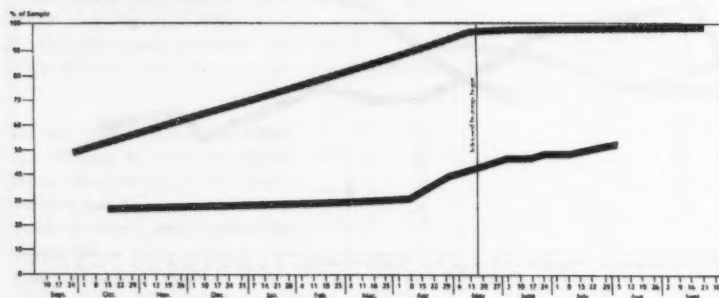
Our Long Island study found that the viewers who were most likely to change their minds (concluding that Mr. Nixon had advance knowledge of the break-in) had voted for Humphrey in 1968 and for Nixon in 1972. (We should not mistake this finding for evidence of mass conversions due to the coverage. For one thing, a great deal of viewing was probably motivated by partisan convictions. By the time the hearings began, the group without an opinion about the President's involvement was not very large. If you were convinced the President was innocent, you probably didn't watch the hearings much or at all.)

Even those who approached the hearings feeling they already knew everything about Watergate were hit with a tremendous amount of information, some of it hard to absorb. At the beginning of the hearings, Watergate meant only a bungled burglary at the Democratic National headquarters. By the time phase one ended, in August, Watergate had become an umbrella under which were gathered such disparate elements as the break-in at Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office, the "enemies" list, the political use of income tax audits, the White House taping of conversations, and other events. And indeed, changes occurred in the public's perception of Watergate's meaning. Alex Edelstein's study found that approximately two-thirds of the respondents said some of their beliefs had changed between the time they first heard about Watergate and the end of June. When asked

The changing public perception of Watergate

————— Watergate is "a very serious matter because it reveals corruption in the administration" (Gallup)
 "Do you think the Watergate episode is a very serious question involving honesty in the White House" (Harris)
 % of sample answering 'yes'.
 (Trend derived from combination of two polls).

----- Have you read or heard about Watergate? (Gallup)
 % of sample answering 'yes'.



what views had changed, the greatest number, 42 per cent, listed their views on the nature of the problem (for example, "Watergate is a bigger problem than I thought it was;" "At first I thought it was just some two-bit burglary, but now I realize it's more serious.") Our own study shows that people's responses to queries about the Watergate revelations point to "shock" and "amazement." And when asked what they were most shocked about, respondents said they were amazed at how far the administration was prepared to move against individuals in pursuit of its own ends.

Seventy-seven per cent of the respondents (not all of them viewers) in a special *Time*-Yankelovich survey taken near the end of phase one agreed with the statement that Watergate "shows how even the privacy of ordinary citizens is being threatened these days." However, we should not misread this high agreement as evidence of a revival of concern for general principles of civil liberties (remember the McCarthy study). Rather, our own data suggest that people are much stronger in their personal condemnation of public wrongdoing when they can clearly visualize personal harm being inflicted on them or people like themselves. Watergate had begun as an impersonal wrong, a break-in at the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee; as the hearings progressed, the acts that were revealed became more personally threatening. The more people felt personally threatened, the more aroused and punitive was their response.

If there were no massive shifts in public opinion caused by televising the Watergate hearings, there is evidence that, over a longer period of time, public opinion changed, and changed dramatically. Studies like the one Alex Edelstein is doing for the ANPA News Research Center on media credibility in Longview, Wash., suggest the magnitude of the change. For example, when Edelstein made his survey at the end of June, he asked people if, after they first heard about Watergate, they found anything hard to believe about it. While 21 per cent of his respondents said they found nothing hard to believe, a whopping 64 per cent said there was at least one thing they found hard to believe about Watergate at first, and another 15 per cent said they could find two or more things about Wa-

tergate hard to believe. When asked what the main thing was they found hard to believe, 42 per cent said they found the Watergate events, like the break-in and burglary, hard to believe; another 25 per cent said they couldn't believe Nixon officials were involved; interestingly enough, only 12 per cent said they found the media hard to believe and only 10 per cent said they couldn't believe Mr. Nixon was involved. Edelstein asked his respondents to describe their thinking about Watergate in detail. As a result, he elicited, on the average, four facts about Watergate from each respondent. He found that people said they had changed their minds about two Watergate facts, on the average, between the time when they first heard about it and the end of June 1973. As far as Edelstein is concerned, such change is proof that what was happening was a "process of education" whereby people received new information and, based on that new information, changed some of their opinions. As we mentioned, Edelstein found that the greatest number of people (42 per cent) changed their minds about the nature of the problem (for example, "Watergate is a more important kind of problem than I first thought it was"). Thirty-one per cent changed their minds about the President's involvement, 27 per cent changed their minds about the involvement of other top Republican officials and only 7 per cent changed their minds about the media. (Edelstein believes, incidentally, that the media never were on trial during phase one of Watergate.)

All of this leads Edelstein to conclude that a process was involved between June 1972 and June 1973. "Things were happening. What we end up with is a portrait of a community evaluating its beliefs and disbeliefs about Watergate. This story was probably repeated over and over again throughout towns in America. People were making very pragmatic judgments about Watergate based on their experiential capacities."

Undoubtedly, then, the sleeping giant is stirring—not primarily as a result of the gavel-to-gavel coverage, but stirring nonetheless. Where the movement will take us, if anywhere, is a question that must elude, for the present, both sociologists and journalists.

The folks in the boondocks: challenging a journalistic myth

"But will it play in Peoria?"

—Question asked within the Nixon White House

The notion that the people in the Peorias of America respond in some manner different from urban or East Coast Americans has become an accepted part of current political and media wisdom. The Nixonites gave us "the silent majority" and "middle America." Theodore H. White speaks of "Out There" in his new book on the 1972 campaign. And Clifton Daniel, associate editor and Washington bureau chief of the New York Times, told a *Woman's Wear Daily* reporter not so long ago:

You know, there is a tendency here in New York to make too much about "great issues." People out in the country are not quite so agitated about these things as we are. They don't intellectualize about them the way we do. They're busy planting their lawns . . . going to Disneyworld . . . getting the boat ready . . . living their everyday lives. Maybe it's a good thing they're not too concerned about what goes on. . . .

These descriptions, to my mind, have always had an unreal—as well as patronizing—sound; they seem like Madison Avenue's version of the "typical" American family in its television commercials, families held together by liquid Prell. During the past summer, a group of us at MIT and Wellesley College tried to find out, in a modest way, if the political picture of "Out There" had any more basis in reality than the Prell people. Specifically, we conducted *panel studies*, observing over an extended period and interviewing extensively a small number of ordinary Americans as the Watergate hearings unfolded. We were particularly interested in their media consumption habits and their levels of awareness: how closely they followed the Watergate story (if indeed they did); why they reacted to specific events, testimony or newsmakers. Finally, we wanted to learn what changes, if any, occurred in their political attitudes during the course of the summer. While we were not literally in Peoria, Ill., we did do interviewing in working- and middle-class neighborhoods in East Longmeadow, Mass.; Frankton, Ind.; Dayton, Ohio; Des Moines, Iowa; and Portland, Oregon. We talked to over 50 people, men and women,

young and old, engineers and semi-skilled assembly line workers, Republicans, Democrats and independents.

Our first general finding was that, contrary to any picture of middle Americans tending their lawns and dialing out on the news, our panels paid close—even avid—attention to the Watergate scandals throughout the summer. In some cases, in fact, people "Out There" were able to follow the hearings more closely than Easterners. The blue-collar workers on the second shift at the Delco-Remy plant in Anderson, Ind., for example, don't report to the assembly line until 4:30 p.m.; many of them spent the day watching the televised Ervin committee hearings (as well as keeping up with the newspaper accounts) and then discussed Watergate at work. On the West Coast, the time lag meant that Oregonians could watch the morning sessions before going to work; one Portland business executive delayed going to his office until the morning hearings adjourned around 12:30 Washington time (9:30 on the West Coast). But people all over in our panels watched regularly; in western Massachusetts, of ten panelists, seven read about Watergate daily in the newspapers and four watched the hearings regularly, especially the rebroadcasts at night on public television. Attention to the hearings was unexpectedly high among Nixon voters. In the engineering department of a large manufacturing plant in Dayton, there was only one McGovern voter in a group of 17 men holding managerial and foreman jobs; but a large majority of the group followed and approved of the hearings.

A second finding was that the hearings stirred strong emotions among people "Out There." In Iowa, inflation and farm prices were the overriding topics this summer; but—again contrary to many reports—concern about the bread-and-butter issues *heightened* rather than blurred the impact of Watergate. Norman Sandler, one of our group who worked for UPI in Des Moines, found that people were following feed prices and phase four news in the national pages of newspapers, then turning to the Watergate stories in the adjoining columns. Further, several people made a linkage between the "corruption of Watergate" and the "corruption of special interest policies" like the wheat sale.

A third finding was that panelists reacted—not surprisingly—to individual personalities rather than to broad Constitutional issues. Many people formed their opinions about Watergate based on the face on

the screen. Howard Baker was "impressive," John Mitchell—"more of a Godfather than The Godfather," John Wilson—"feisty," Edward Gurney—"Nixon's boy." One fiftyish woman, a Nixon voter, was interviewed before, during, and after the testimony of John Dean III. About Dean, she concluded: "He can't be lying because he never makes a mistake. No one who was lying could be sure of every single detail . . . of every single date . . ." A middle-aged Oregonian, a milk man, concluded after watching John Erlichman's testimony: "He's obviously lying; look at his sweaty brow and the way he bites his lip like a fish. . . ." There was little discussion of the civil libertarian issues raised by the "plumbers' unit," mail covers, wire taps, or the office break-ins.

Yet, it would be too easy—and unfair—to conclude that Constitutional questions were somehow over the heads of the people "Out There." The Watergate scandal, particularly the celebrated "battle of the tapes," offered an unequalled opportunity for news organizations to inform millions of their readers and viewers about governmental processes in a vivid, even melodramatic, way. An examination of the newspapers and television accounts available to most Americans shows that, by and large, this "civics lesson" went untaught. The news services may have sent out stories of analysis and interpretation, but few of them showed up in the tightly constricted national pages of regional newspapers. Most daily coverage outside New York and Washington was—there is no other word for it—perfunctory. It is not hard to see why the network early evening news programs have become so important in getting out national news.

Yet, the "battle of the tapes" excited real attention; specific details about the tapes were widely known and discussed. However, the question more often than not was, "Why did Alexander Butterfield tell about the tapes just then?" The wider questions of executive privilege or separation of powers were not really explored, though there was the gut feeling that, as one Delco-Remy worker said, "The President can't disobey a court order because he's no better than anyone else."

Just how and why political attitudes change has been a matter of lively debate among communications researchers. One older body of research suggests that the mass media have relatively little effect on individual decision-making compared to, say, the personal influence of family and friends. Another, more popular, position holds that skilled practitioners of the television arts can manipulate the attitudes—and subsequent voting behavior—of the audience. Our own work found holes in both these positions. People obviously changed their minds as a result of watching and reading about Watergate. One Massachusetts woman—Italian, Catholic, a high school dropout with four grown children—had voted

for Nixon in 1972 because he was "more of a politician than McGovern, more positive and a better decision maker. . . ." After John Dean's testimony, the woman became convinced of the President's involvement: "If he's implicated, let him pay for it, let him go down with Benedict Arnold." The President's speech on Watergate on August 15 failed to move her. She had hoped that "the truth might finally come out," but the President had been "evasive and passing the buck. . . ." If he didn't resign, she said, he should be impeached.

Panel reaction to Mr. Nixon's August 15 speech was particularly instructive. In past television appearances, Mr. Nixon has been quite effective in getting his message across. A kind of commander-in-chief effect has been at work; any time a president—any president—appears on television and states his case to 85 million Americans, his job ratings go up. The rise occurs even when the president may be announcing bad news (John F. Kennedy's highest rating came after the Bay of Pigs disaster). This rallying effect, however, was apparently inoperative this summer. MIT student Barbara Moore, observing a group of engineers in Dayton, found that "everyone was anxious to see Nixon's televised speech, and it was the topic of discussion for quite a while." Afterwards, however, "absolutely no one in the office thought that the speech was convincing." Five said that they thought it did no harm, the other twelve expressed various degrees of anger or disappointment over what they felt to be "Nixon's cop-out." They wanted an explanation instead of Mr. Nixon's comments. By the end of the summer, there were at least eight avid anti-Nixon people in the group, and only two admitted Nixon supporters. A foreman said, "Nixon's taken the confidence away even from those who voted for him. . . ."

Our panel studies are still going on; in general, our findings seem to complement what people tell Harris and Gallup in their scientific samplings of public opinion on a one-time basis. Equally important, we found nothing to support the idea that the citizens in the Peorias of the country are either passive or malleable. They read, they listen, they draw conclusions, although perhaps as much from feelings as from facts. As one Oregonian said, "We care." It would be enormously helpful to the media consumer, of course, if the news suppliers showed a similar sense of care.

EDWIN DIAMOND

Edwin Diamond is a visiting lecturer in the Department of Political Science, MIT, and a commentator for the *Post-Newsweek* stations, Washington, D.C. Michael McNamee, Barbara Moore, Norman Sandler, Paul E. Schindler, Jr., and Peggy Seminario, all of the News Study Group, MIT, contributed to this project.

Notes on the art

Measuring the obscenity threshold

■ How strong is sentiment against sex in movies, books, magazines, underground newspapers? That question gained new importance when the U.S. Supreme Court decided last June that "contemporary community standards" should be the touchstone used when defining obscenity. And that question was asked by the *Gazette*, in Alexandria, Va., which has conducted a series of public opinion surveys with the aid of graduate students in the Department of Communications at American University in Washington, D.C. The most recent survey showed a surprising tolerance toward pornography in Alexandria, and it suggests that inexpensive polling, perhaps in cooperation with nearby campuses, might be useful to other local news media—particularly where, as in Alexandria, polling discovered some facts that conflict with the views purveyed in "hard" news.

The results of the survey appeared on page one of the *Gazette's* July 20 issue and ran next to an interview with John E. Kennahan, the commonwealth's attorney for Alexandria, who, when asked if he felt that the Court's new ruling is vague and difficult to interpret, said, "I have no problem with it." But a different view was discovered among the citizenry by the *Gazette's* poll, a telephone survey designed to make polling readily—and inexpensively—available to local newspapers.

Of the 200 randomly selected adults, 61 per cent felt that there are no easily determined community standards on obscenity or are uncertain on the issue. The only type of scenes most of the respondents (65.5 per cent) said they would label obscene were those depicting abnormal sexual activity.

Of those polled, only 36.5 per cent said they felt scenes of normal sexual activity were obscene, only 23 per cent said they considered scenes displaying nudity out of bounds, and only 19 per cent said they would object to profanity.

A surprisingly large percentage—28.5—said they considered neither adult nudity, normal sexual activity, abnormal sexual activity, or profanity as obscene, although the percentage of women who would find any of these items obscene was higher—by more than 13 per cent—than the percentage of men who reacted similarly.

Other findings of the poll showed that 65 per cent of the respondents either feel that there should be no ban on pornography in their city, or at least none for adults, and that 67.2 per cent feel there is no need for a crackdown in Alexandria on obscene materials, or are uncertain about it.

As to preferences among those polled for ways to best determine the seemingly elusive community standards on obscenity, 40.1 per cent indicated that a specially elected or appointed board of local citizens would be desirable. The next largest percentage were uncertain as to who should handle the job. Others named the city council, courts, a referendum—or the commonwealth's attorney.

The recent "hard" news about obscenity in Virginia has been made by Charles Haugh, the commonwealth's attorney in Albemarle County. Early last summer, Haugh banned the sale of *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Popular Photography* and similar publications in his mid-Virginia county. A special grand jury was subsequently empaneled

in Albemarle County to determine community standards on pornography, but it refused to act on the matter.

Alexandria, a suburb of Washington, D.C., counts a large proportion of white-collar workers with high education and income levels among its 111,000 residents; Alexandrians, as a group, may thus have more liberal attitudes than many elsewhere in the state. The 200 persons polled for the *Gazette* were a random sample of all Alexandria residents age 18 and older, selected from the telephone book; the selection was not limited to the *Gazette's* 19,594 readers.

In order to guarantee a fair representation of both sexes, the pollsters asked for a male if the fourth digit in the telephone number was even, and for a female if it was odd. They did not conduct the interview if a person of the predetermined sex was unavailable. Responses were obtained during four evenings of telephoning.

Two earlier surveys conducted last spring for the *Gazette* found that 88 per cent of those Alexandrians polled were in favor of a state-operated lottery and that more than 77 per cent favored abolition of the city's "blue laws."

Such polls may be economically feasible for other small newspapers, as well as for small radio and TV stations. Depending upon the complexity of the issue under consideration, the cost from inception through publication may range from \$150 to \$250, including development of the questionnaire, actual phoning expenses, pollsters' pay, and distillation and tabulating of the information gathered. Costs were lower for the *Gazette's* polls, because students taking research courses did the polling.

JACK E. ORWANT

Jack E. Orwant, a member of the Department of Communication faculty at American University, supervised the *Gazette's* student pollsters.

Books

THE RIGHT TO KNOW: MEDIA AND THE COMMON GOOD. By William H. Marnell. A Continuum Book, The Seabury Press, \$6.95.

■ Unlike the book of similar title reviewed in the previous issue (*Your Right to Know* by Charles W. Wahlen, Jr.), this treatise by a newspaperman-turned-philosopher does not do much for freedom of information. On the contrary, Marnell contends that existing legal restrictions on the press are good for the country. He sees the media less as chroniclers than as disturbers of the peace threatening "the stability of American life." Marnell comes down on the side of stability, to the extent of advocating a government journal that "could end such unsound and unseemly news raids as led to the publication of the Pentagon Papers." Libertarian-minded journalists will find his position distasteful, for it tends to revive the "balancing" view of the First Amendment that would sometimes give primacy to other supposed social needs over freedom of speech and press.

ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF TELEVISION REGULATION. By Roger G. Noll, Merton J. Peck, and John J. McGowan. Studies in the Regulation of Economic Activity, The Brookings Institution, \$8.95.

■ This intricate and often ingenious study comes down to a very simple point: that government regulation has been devoted to preserving the existing structure of commercial television (which needs no such protection), and that there exist alternatives that "consumers are willing to pay for and that business is willing to provide." Therefore, the authors argue, current forms of regulation should be dropped in favor of a new freedom that would provide greater diversity.

Their contention that a system of freer competition would produce a more diverse, more widely owned television system may alarm present license-holders. It may also worry those, such as the United Church of Christ, who see government regulators as guarantors less of business rights than such public policies as adequate minority employment and balanced programming in news and public affairs. The Brookings study tends to sug-

gest that all such problems would solve themselves, but one need look only at the unregulated print media to know that they have not.

CAMPAIGN '72: THE MANAGERS SPEAK. Edited by Ernest R. May and Janet Fraser. Harvard University Press, \$7.95.

■ Herein are reflections by panjandrums of press and politics on the great doings of 1972—or, at least, their opinions as they stood in January, 1973, when the Nieman Foundation and Kennedy School of Government had them up to Harvard for a conference. Some of the discussion now seems positively eerie, as in Jeb Stuart Magruder's assertion: "I can honestly say that I do not know of any harassment that we engaged in on a planned basis. . . . I don't say there wasn't some, but I think there was much less than was reported . . ."

The discussion of press coverage, however, stands up well, as conducted by James M. Perry, James M. Naughton, David S. Broder and Alan L. Otten for the journalists, and Magruder, Max M. Kampelman, Gary W. Hart, Anne Wexler, Ben J. Wattenberg and others for the pols. It ends with Naughton's conclusion that both groups are paranoid.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS. By Melvyn H. Bloom. Thomas Y. Crowell, \$10.

■ Bloom, a former reporter for CBS and now public relations director for the United Jewish Appeal, offers a selective history of the work of p.r. wizards on the national level from 1952 through 1968; he provides as well a bemused afterword on 1972. His treatment is temperate but critical, and his conclusions are sober:

- That the danger to American political processes lies less in the use of political public relations *per se* than in the misapplication of commercial selling techniques in political situations.

- That if p.r. deprives the campaign of substantive issues, then the election itself can resolve no important questions.

- That the press still has not shifted sufficiently from traditional reporting of candidate activity to investigation of the inner mechanisms and philosophies of campaigns.

SO SHORT A TIME: A BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN REED AND LOUISE BRYANT. By Barbara Gelb. W. W. Norton, \$7.95.

■ The chronicles of pre-World War I literary radicalism give a sufficient share of attention to John Reed, the American journalist who wrote *Ten Days that Shook the World* and who was buried in the Kremlin Wall. But there are only passing references to Louise Bryant, his wife. Barbara Gelb, in the spirit of our age, audaciously gives Bryant equal billing with Reed in this double biography. She is not able to portray Bryant's achievements as equal to Reed's, but she at least restores Bryant's standing as a journalist and advocate, in a time when dissent was dangerous.

Still, this tale is only incidentally about journalism. It is more about an extended affair that happened to be formalized by marriage. The burden of the narrative is carried by the voluminous correspondence between the pair during their frequent separations in the half-dozen years they had. They met in Portland, Ore., in 1915, when Reed, already a celebrity, was paying a bored visit to his home town, and Bryant was the restless, artistically inclined wife of a local dentist. She followed him to New York, only to become deeply involved with the still-undiscovered Eugene O'Neill. (Gelb, who was co-author of a notable O'Neill biography, is able to draw on rich material about this liaison.) Still, she married Reed.

They had no years of quiet contentment. They attached themselves to socialism and to the Russian revolution. Reed became heavily enmeshed in Kremlin intrigues and was unable to break free even when, it appears, he was becoming disillusioned. Bryant returned to America from Russia and defied fatigue and illness in carrying out cross-country speaking tours. But she was with Reed when he died in Moscow of typhus on October 17, 1920. Her life thereafter was a disaster—an incomprehensible marriage to the diplomat William C. Bullitt and then solitary decline and death, at the age of 49, in Paris.

Barbara Gelb's approach to this tale is less that of the historian than that of a personal chronicler. The historical background offered is just adequate for understanding; the focus is on the two principals—flawed, passionate actors in a drama that was perhaps a little too great for their talents.

THE NEWS OF DETROIT: HOW A NEWSPAPER AND A CITY GREW TOGETHER. By William W. Lutz. Little, Brown, \$6.95.

■ The nation's largest evening newspaper certainly deserves a history, and the centennial of the *Detroit News* offered that paper the opportunity. To its credit, the *News* did not settle for a hack promotional job but commissioned an experienced staff member to do a serious piece of work. The result is a commendably compact (200 pages or so) book that is reasonable in tone and often engaging in anecdote. Moreover, the author avers, the management of the *News* refused to exercise control over the content.

That the result is not entirely successful as the history of notable institution stems in good part from the extraordinarily difficult scheme the author has attempted—a blending of the *News'* story with that of Detroit. The result, unpredictably, is that the newspaper frequently tends to slip out of focus; for example, in a chapter on the early automobile industry there is almost nothing relevant to the paper.

That the *News* is not chronicled more fully is a matter for regret, for Lutz presents many tantalizing glimpses—not only of the powerful personalities of the Scripps family, which founded the *News* as its first enterprise in journalism, but of many later thorny figures that have directed the paper, moving it from the Scripps reform position to the strikingly conservative stance of today. Lutz says that he had access to corporate records and correspondence, but there is little information on what really made the *News* go, how it operated in its upper echelons, how it determined its major policies. This is especially true as one approaches the present.

Lutz's is by no means the only newspaper history with such gaps; possibly this is a defect inherent in assigning newsroom writers, usually divorced from policymaking, to describe what has happened upstairs. In this case, the defect is important, because (aside from a curious introductory anecdote on the *News'* decision to condemn publication of the Pentagon Papers), there is little to indicate how the *News* acquired the hard-shell image it now projects.

JB

Unfinished business

In Defense of Heft

TO THE REVIEW:

In "Fat Newspapers and Slim Coverage" Ben Bagdikian seems to be operating on a set of assumptions common among newspaper critics and unfortunately being passed along to newspapers' detriment to a younger generation of journalists.

I share Mr. Bagdikian's implied rebuke that fat and profitable newspapers ought to reinvest more of their earnings in reader services, including more "live" staff coverage. I tell that to my own budget makers several times a year. However, he forgot the facts of newspaper life when he commented that "the power of the home delivered printed paper to survive will depend not on the ads. . . ." As editor of Miami's second daily, which has less pure heft than its competition, I can assure you that one of the principal survival features of the daily printed newspaper is its ad content. Readers want ads. It is simple history in this business, for instance, that in a competitive situation the newspaper that gains dominance in classifieds has an edge very difficult, almost impossible, to overcome.

It is a fact that a dominant newspaper offering a housewife the opportunity to shop for groceries, department store wares and other goods through the printed page has a clear and definite circulation edge over a newspaper that does not have as complete "merchandising news." Ads contain specific, essential consumer information. Giving the price of a can of beans is a helluva lot more specific and serviceable to the reader than most of the sloppily reported so-called consumer news papers run in news space. A newspaper without grocery and department store lineage has a serious content deficiency. It lacks information the reader wants.

Obviously, I want more aggressive news reporting, more space for

news and more reporters to cover more of the things that people ought to know, but I am not contemptuous of advertising.

Consequently, I do not see that Mr. Bagdikian's article makes any valid point at all, except to show that some news space isn't used very well, and we've all known that for a long time. Moreover, it leaves the negative and perhaps even destructive notions that newspapers have turned little of their new prosperity to reader service and that carrying ads is somehow counterproductive to readership. I wouldn't want reporters to believe either of those ideas. If we could consistently write news stories as informative, eye-catching and pertinent to readers' interests as do the ad copy writers, I would be delighted.

SYLVAN MEYER
Editor
Miami News
Miami, Fla.

TO THE REVIEW:

That section of Ben H. Bagdikian's article, "Fat Newspapers and Slim Coverage" [Sept./Oct.] in which he referred to the Orlando *Sentinel* (now the *Sentinel Star*) is in error. Bagdikian states:

Not all the material classified by Media Records as "non-advertising" is real news. The Orlando, Fla., *Sentinel*, for example, is listed as having almost the same amount of news in 1970—18,831,000 lines—as the New York *Times*—18,580,000. An even higher proportion of its paper—36.6 per cent—is devoted to "nonadvertising" than the *Times*' 31.4 per cent. Yet reading the two papers does not give the impression of equal amounts of real news. One reason may be that the Orlando paper annually publishes at least twenty-nine "Special Sections." Some of these in 1970 were Realtors, Home Fashion, Insurance, Fall Heating. Such material, counted as "news" by Media Records, is not counted as news in this portion of the study.

The figures are accurate and so are the percentages. But his assumption that our "nonadvertis-

ing" lineage is based on "special sections" is wrong. We have extensive regional coverage, probably more than anyone else in the United States. That accounts for the difference. Purely and simply, we have more news lineage than the daily New York *Times* because we print more. I might add that the New York *Times* prints special sections and all papers are measured by Media Records with the same formula.

For 1972 our total news lineage as measured by Media Records was 21,133,421. Of that, only 34,878 was preprint (preprint is Media's category for the "special sections" to which Bagdikian alludes). If they left the sections out of the count entirely, it would barely change the figures.

JOSEPH J. MCGOVERN
Executive Editor
Sentinel Star
Orlando, Fla.

Failed Promise?

TO THE REVIEW:

I would like to state my objection to the article by Ron Powers and Jerrold Oppenheim, "The Failed Promise of All-News Radio" [Sept./Oct.]. It was admittedly based on two men's listening of less than a day in various cities and a casual awareness of a Chicago newsradio station. The article displays such an inadequate job of research and good reporting that it defies discussing the issues on the grounds on which they were presented.

NEIL E. DERROUGH
Vice President
CBS Radio
New York, N.Y.

TO THE REVIEW:

In their recent article, Ron Powers and Jerrold Oppenheim were far off base in reporting on America's first all-news radio station, KFAX San Francisco. First, Maurie Webster had nothing to do with KFAX (he was at another San

Francisco station). KFAQ was managed by Gil Paltridge and Ray Rhodes, who should be given credit for pioneering the all-news concept. Secondly, KFAQ devoted at least 40 minutes each hour to hard news, and the average was probably about 50 minutes. The station never devoted one minute, let alone 15 at a time, to any Chamber of Commerce meeting.

ED SALZMAN
Editor
California Journal
Sacramento, Calif.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The letter writer is former managing editor of KFAQ Newsradio. The authors' reply: "Salzman is right about Webster, who managed KCBS-AM in San Francisco."*

Gloryosky!

TO THE REVIEW:

Leapin' lizards! Let's hope Daddy Warbucks doesn't see Little Orphan Annie quoted [PASSING COMMENT, Sept./Oct.] as exclaiming "Gloryosky," because that's Little Annie Rooney's special word. If Punjab and the Asp sic Sandy on you, our eyes will blunk out.

HUGH CRAIG
Washington Post
Washington, D.C.

TO THE REVIEW:

It is not often that I rush to defend a competitor. But your recent dig at the editorial judgment exercised by the Buffalo *Courier-Express* in omitting certain episodes of the *Doonesbury* comic strip on the ground that they were "tasteless" makes me wonder why you think editors should not exercise such judgments on all syndicated material, just as they would on local staff material.

What are editors for if not to edit—for taste as well as for other standards of acceptability? Every editor's judgment about what comics or columns to purchase in the first place is an exercise of taste,

but that hardly relieves him of the responsibility for continuing to make judgments as he edits each day's flow of copy.

MILLARD C. BROWNE
Editorial Page Editor
Buffalo Evening News
Buffalo, N.Y.

Reporting on Business

TO THE REVIEW:

It is with a continuing sense of hurt and injustice that I am finally bound to write you regarding Chris Welles' deliberately distorted article, "The Bleak Wasteland of Financial Reporting [July/Aug.]. I do so with reluctance because it focuses even more unwelcome attention on it. Yet, the record of *Finance* magazine in my seven and one-half years of ownership speaks for itself; to defend it against irresponsible reporting and unfair comment requires that I deny and therefore must prove that *Finance* is not an editorial prostitute. This provides undesirable additional currency to a cruel and malicious libel, written by someone connected over a period of time with a competitive publication.

I have never met Mr. Welles, and his only contact with me or any members of the *Finance* staff was a brief telephone conversation just as I was leaving for Europe. He mentioned the Endicott Johnson-Bernard McDonough episode, and I tried to explain the facts briefly to him. Mr. McDonough attacked me on March 31, 1969, after an item appeared in the "Wall Street Whispers" column (February 1969 issue). Although the dates make clear what the facts are, and Mr. Welles assured me he had copies, the article published in the *Review* implies that the magazine was used for personal retaliation. The truth is that it was just the reverse, and Mr. Welles knew it, so we can't put it down to sloppy reporting. It appears to be deliberate distortion.

While I was consultant for Endicott Johnson, I fought Mr. McDonough's takeover tactics and warned

management of his ultimate objective while he was still professing to have only investor interest. Unfortunately for the company, I was right and part of his strategy was to use my services to embarrass the president, Eli White, and to get rid of all key executives. He was successful in doing so.

In fact, the entire tone of the article promotes the impression that editorial treatment is directly related to advertising, and states flatly that the magazine was operated as a subsidiary of the Manning Public Relations Firm, which is simply a lie, legally and morally. Mr. Welles asked me, and I told him it was a matter of public record.

Finance Publishing Corporation, founded in 1940 (which makes us 33 years old, not 30), was purchased by me while I owned the Manning Public Relations Firm, Inc. (which was liquidated in February 1969). At the time, I explained to my clients and to the editors of the magazine that no client would ever appear editorially in its pages, nor be permitted to buy advertising space. None ever did, and an examination of the published issues offers clear evidence that this policy was never violated. The only conflict that ever occurred was that the 22 banks which made up the consortium of Allied International objected that this policy would prevent their nomination for Banker of the Year, and I promptly resigned the account seven months in advance in order not to jeopardize their interests. Until I phased out the public relations business, I was neither publisher nor editor.

There are so many points at issue with the truth that I am restricting this letter to the more blatant misinterpretations of the facts, all of which were available to Mr. Welles. For example, he mentions an unnamed public relations firm that "at least on two occasions agreed to sell space in return for editorial mention." As publisher and editor-in-chief, I would have to know of such occasions, and there were none. I am known as a forthright, independent person with more than 20 years as a financial public relations professional com-

manding the highest fees in the business, so you could safely assume that most firms would be aware that such a suggestion to me or any editor working for me would be the best way of killing a story.

The truth of the matter is that *Finance* has a record of exactly the opposite approach, evidenced in the exclusive publishing of *Capital Position and Fails over 30 Days* of all major brokerage firms in the U.S. The addition of the *Fails* since 1968 and the publishing of the names of restricted firms resulted in the formation of a New York Stock Exchange committee of major Wall Street firms (all contract advertisers) to "dissuade" *Finance* from publishing. We are the only publication which does, and it is a major research project conducted at great expense. We still (in 1973) have not regained the lost advertising from the brokerage houses which were unable to influence our editorial policy, and most of this business went to the publication with which Mr. Welles has been affiliated. In his one-sided approach, he failed to mention the journalistic enterprise which has characterized these issues for the past five years. Nor the cost to us, of which he is well aware.

Perhaps the most ironic comment on which Mr. Welles gives totally incorrect detail and the inevitable wrong conclusions involve an unnamed free-lance writer, and a managing editor who allegedly resigned because of the situation. The free-lance writer was Neil Martin, who "demanded his by-line be dropped." A writer who sells the same story to two separate publications, as Neil Martin did to us and another, and was dropped out for that reason, uses his by-line on only one publication, in the hope that it sometimes delays the discovery. The Puerto Rican story which was assigned by the friendly editor, now free-lance himself, was returned for rewrite because it purported to cover the industry but, in fact, covered only one bank. Mrs. Simmons, in the article identified only as advertising manager, was the sole member of our staff who had lived and worked in Puerto Rico for 12 years, and knew

personally members of the total banking community there. At no time were any advertisers solicited on the basis of the article. (None came unsolicited, either.) It had been assigned to the writer only because he happened to be going to Puerto Rico at the time and no one on our staff, including me, knew anything about it—except, of course, the then managing editor, his good friend. It did not surface on our editorial schedule until early 1973, along with an inventory of unused paid articles, all of which needed updating, and most of which were assigned to accommodate the writer, rather than the magazine. It was this kind of accommodation that led us to encourage our editor to join the free-lance society of friends so helpful to (as opposed to, say, competitive with) each other.

It is true that most of our advertisers have been with us for many years, and since they constitute the leadership in the financial community, they are frequently newsworthy subjects. Yet, Continental Illinois Bank was nominated as "Banker of the Year" for five years before receiving the award in 1972. They have been advertisers for all 33 years of the magazine's life. E. F. Hutton and Eaton, both mentioned as big advertisers in 1972, are long-time advertisers. In fact, Eaton used to take all 12 covers until we discovered we made more money with different back cover advertisers than with just one. You would have to reach pretty far to connect a creative capitalist story with their advertising program. Neither Ed Clark, Eaton's advertising director, nor J. Walter Thompson knew of the article until they saw it in the book. Neither Eaton nor Continental's advertising people have any relationship to their public relations operations.

I am aware that Mr. Welles' article constitutes grounds for malicious libel, but at this time, I feel that you will want to set the record straight, not just with publication of my letter, but with another assignment of the story of *Finance* as reported to an objective writer, preferably not connected with a competitor which has been actively

seeking to acquire us. The nice thing about publishing is that the record is all in cold print for anyone who cares to examine it. Even my age. I am not 55, not yet. To make a woman older than she actually is has to be the ultimate outrage.

ELIZABETH MacDONALD MANNING
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief
Finance
New York, N.Y.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Welles comments, "I would agree that 'the record of *Finance* magazine in my [Mrs. Manning's] seven and one-half years of ownership speaks for itself.' Only too clearly. It is revealing that Mrs. Manning is forced to go back nearly five years to produce an exception to her apparent editorial policy of unmitigated praise and affection for story subjects, many of whom are major advertisers. No amount of her self-serving rhetoric and assertions that not everyone she writes about advertises with her will obscure that lackluster record. Regarding her major allegations:

"1) Mrs. Manning's attacks on Bernard McDonough were clearly 'personal retaliation,' since her public relations firm was summarily fired from the Endicott Johnson account on May 15, 1968, as a result of the start of McDonough's takeover. The level of Mrs. Manning's attacks is indicated by the following lead sentence from her December 1968 'Wall Street Whispers' column item: 'B for Bernard, M for McDonough has different and distinct connotations for stockholders and management.'

"2) According to a Dun & Bradstreet Business Information Report dated May 27, 1968, Finance Publishing Corp., publishers of *Finance*, was a 'subsidiary of Manning Public Relations Firm Inc.' Mrs. Manning was president of both the p.r. firm and Finance Publishing Corp., which would seem to have given her some control over the magazine.

"3) Institutional Investor is only one of nearly a dozen publications I write for. I am not on its

payroll, and it accounts for only a fraction of my free-lance writing income. Anyone who thinks brokerage house advertisers have left *Finance en masse* for *II*, presumably because it is a less hostile environment for ads, is invited to read some of the stories on the brokerage industry and Wall Street which I have written for *II* in recent years. In contrast to her statement that *II* 'has been actively seeking to acquire us,' I am informed by Gilbert E. Kaplan, head of *II*, that the subject came up briefly during a lunch between him and Mrs. Manning four years ago and has never been pursued or discussed between them since.

"4) According to the *D&B* report, Mrs. Manning was born in 1918. If she was not 55 when my article was published, it is a good bet she will be by the time her letter is published."

TO THE REVIEW:

Chris Welles misstates the facts when he says that "radio station WCBS in New York recently recruited the editor of *Dun's Review* to give business commentaries in return for ads for his magazine." This implies that I am not paid for my broadcasting, and is simply not true. I have an eminently satisfactory financial arrangement for the broadcasts. I believe the article has damaged my professional reputation, both in publishing and broadcasting.

RAYMOND BRADY
Editor,
Dun's Review
New York, N.Y.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Mr. Welles comments, "Mr. Brady's original arrangement with WCBS was as I described it in my story. I am informed that recently he began to receive formal compensation. I apologize for the error, though I am not sure why revelation of what at least was at first the arrangement should have 'damaged' his 'professional reputation,' particularly since the clear intent of my use of this incident was to criticize not Mr. Brady but WCBS for failing to provide an adequate budget for business news."*

TO THE REVIEW:

I would like to draw attention to some inaccurate insinuations that were made from remarks that were accredited to me in Chris Welles' article, "The Bleak Wasteland of Financial Reporting." Specifically, it was not my intention to in any way infer that *Finance* magazine uses editorial to sell advertising schedules. It was also not my intention to indicate that by having a "positive thrust" Mrs. Manning deliberately endeavors to praise story subjects or use it to influence advertisers.

The quotes that Mr. Welles used made it appear that I was taking issue with Mrs. Manning's position. I do not think that this is fair to Mrs. Manning or to me in that in the two years that I served as associate publisher of *Finance*, there was never any suggestion made, to my knowledge, that advertising be traded for editorial.

Although I did not discuss specific accounts with Mr. Welles, I know that E. F. Hutton ran advertising space in the magazine as a direct result of their belief in its market and was purely motivated by marketing considerations. The same is true of North American Rockwell, which has been an advertiser in *Finance* for a number of years.

My remarks to Mr. Welles concerning editorial backdrop and synergism related to the fact that each year *Finance* publishes an editorial calendar which provides advertisers with a list of editorial subjects to be discussed in forthcoming issues. It is a common practice among most special interest publications to attempt to sell advertising against an editorial backdrop that will serve to intensify reader interest in the advertiser's subject.

I do not see how having "positive" orientation in editorial thrust automatically means that advertising and editorial space are related, as Mr. Welles asks his readers to believe. The fact is that *Finance* discussed many subjects other than advertisers. Governmental departments, world organizations and situations, corporate responsibility and personalities all fell under *Fi-*

nance's editorial scrutiny. Many of these had no advertising budgets, nor could they be in any way considered advertising prospects. Still, most of the stories had a positive thrust.

The story on *Finance* by Mr. Welles looked as if it were an attempt to smear Mrs. Manning with superficial and circumstantial evidence and discredit her method of operation. I was personally embarrassed to have my remarks used in such a way.

JOHN RHEIN
Garden City, N.Y.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Mr. Welles comments, "I think Mr. Rhein confuses the difference between what I, the author of the article, inferred from his quotes (which he does not deny) and what a reader of the article should legitimately conclude Mr. Rhein inferred. There was nothing in the way I used his quotes to suggest or indicate he agreed with the conclusions I drew from them. I am amazed Mr. Rhein sees no automatic connection between a deliberately 'positive' editorial 'thrust' of a magazine and the willingness of advertisers, who are frequent story subjects, to advertise in it."*

Women in Journalism

TO THE REVIEW:

I am an aspiring journalist, and presently an editor on my college newspaper. I enjoy reading the *Review*, but I find the coverage of women in journalism lacking. I have never seen an article in the *Review* on women's attempts at journalistic recognition.

The *Review's* credo proclaims observation of journalism's "shortcomings and strengths" — well, women are a strong force within journalism, and will be throughout all the communications industry in the years to come. I could become very discouraged as to a future for myself if I were to read only the *Review*.

BARBARA L. PINZKA
Cincinnati, Ohio

REPORT ON REPORTS

Summaries and reviews of current literature on the media

"Rock 'n' rolls 'n' salami 'n' apples . . ." by Mike Jahn, New York News magazine, August 26.

A telling commentary on freeloading by the press (and others) at the invitation of record companies and public relations firms, including one sad fact about freeloading: since many young writers covering jazz, folk and rock music barely achieve subsistence income, the press party has become the "youth culture's equivalent of the breadline."

"Shooting Wars," by Russell E. Shain, Human Behavior, August.

An assistant professor of journalism at the University of Colorado traces the Pentagon's influence on the American film industry between 1939 and 1970, and argues convincingly that its "assistance provides an economic cushion for movie producers and allows the Pentagon to extract censorship rights over movie scripts." From the end of World War II until the mid-1960s, the Pentagon gave millions of dollars worth of assistance to filmmakers—including access to military bases, provision of military hardware (aircraft carriers, jets, etc.) at nominal cost, and use of large numbers of military personnel. As might be expected, assistance was provided only for those scripts that had received approval, and this meant no criticism of the military. What the effect of these Pentagon-assisted movies may have been on public opinion is unclear, but there is no gainsaying the impact of the armed forces on this "particular segment of the mass media."

"A Different Kind of Paper," by Aimé Gauvin, Audubon, July.

A former radio newscaster turned environmental writer profiles five non-establishment newspapers—the *North Woods Call* of Michigan, the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, the *High Country News* of Wyoming, the *Mountain Eagle* of Kentucky, and the *Maine Times*—and finds that despite minor shortcomings, their "impact is positive and creative." These newspapers differ from most of the underground press in eschewing sex, drugs and music in favor of basic environmental issues. And, in that area, they provide a useful alternative to the establishment press.

"The New York Times in Washington: A Story About Clifton Daniel, Cronyism, and Coconut Donuts," by Barbara Raskin, Washingtonian, August.

Another "inside piece"—by a free-lance writer—on the *Times* Washington bureau, offering the usual amalgam of gossip, interviews, personal observations and recycling of past reportage. Ms. Raskin's judgments are hard. She has some praise for the bureau's work, but also talks of the management's "cautious, conservative attitude toward officialdom . . . and defensive, non-communicative attitude toward its Washington reporters." She says the Washington bureau "desperately needs strong leadership" but believes that the recently appointed bureau chief is "an attractive ambassador . . . rather than a field general." The *Times* is increasingly the subject of such articles simply because of its stature. One can only hope that this author's judgments will eventually prove incorrect and that the Washington bureau will not find itself "treading water."

"The Temptation of a Sacred Cow," by Lewis H. Lapham, Harper's, August; "Newsmen's Privilege: Hearings of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate . . . on . . . Bills to Create a Testimonial Privilege for Newsmen, February 20, 21, 22, 27, March 13 and 14, 1973," U.S. Government Printing Office.

The managing editor of *Harper's* argues against the proposed federal legislation dealing with a journalist's right to protect sources of information, declaring that he "can think of few things more injurious to the press than the passage of a shield law." He resolutely asserts that the proposed legislation strikes him "as foolish because the testimony advanced in its behalf depends on a romantic or mythological idea of the press" as the sole guardian of the republic's virtues, and that the demand for such legislation "proceeds from an inwardly admitted weakness rather than from a publicly proclaimed strength." A shield law protecting sources, says Lapham, would only work to the advantage of the sources and the detriment of the press, for "if bureaucrats and politicians were deprived of the convenience of speaking off the record, they might learn to speak in plain words."

The other side of the coin is presented in the Senate hearings. This government document is must reading for anyone concerned with the issue of confidentiality of press sources. The bulk of the testimony (as well as reprints of articles, reports, and court decisions) argues persuasively that the press *does* need new guarantees if its traditional independence is to continue. Other views are represented, but this document mainly serves as a plea for protection of the press against those who would limit its ability to serve as a watchdog for

the public. The advocates of federal statutory protection admit that the press has more than once overstepped the boundaries of propriety, but they maintain that journalism's freedom to disseminate information to the public needs protection from the type of encroachments that have recently been evident. No testimony is more moving in this regard than that by such newsmen as Earl Caldwell and Joseph Weiler, who have worked to bring unpleasant facts to light despite attempts to undercut them.

"The Journalist as Consumer Critic," Media & Consumer, September.

A special issue based on the belief that journalism ought to add a critical perspective to its coverage of major consumer issues as a way of helping people improve their lives. Although the material—a combination of articles surveying coverage of automobiles, restaurants, and travel—is of an uneven quality, it reflects the hesitations and doubts of the press in treating these subjects and serves as a useful introduction to what is being done and as a touchstone for what should be done.

"Esquire and Playboy: Tortoise and Hare?" Financial World, July 18; "Picking on the Press: Wall Street Is Ignoring the Good News About Newspapers," by Dana L. Thomas, Barron's, July 9; "Halcyon Days for ABC—and All TV," Business Week, August 18.

The mass media are big business, and accordingly are subject to examination by the financial press. These articles are uniformly over-optimistic but well-presented. A comparative study of the financial fortunes of *Playboy* and *Esquire* concludes that given *Playboy's* recent diversification problems, "it may well turn out that *Playboy's* rabbit may be outdistanced by the persistent tortoise pace at *Esquire*." Thomas reports on the decline in the prices of newspaper stocks in the first half of 1973 and asserts that this falling off "flies in the face of a bevy of upbeat statistics," which he presents and analyzes. *Business Week* surveys the coming television season and finds it a financial success for the networks, especially ABC—whose TV operation is examined in some detail.

"Recent Developments in Press Censorship," Press Censorship Newsletter, July-August.

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, headquartered in Washington, D.C., calls itself "the only . . . organization in the nation exclusively devoted to protecting the First Amendment and freedom of information interests of the working press of all media." Its newsletter is an invaluable guide to current legislative and legal developments affecting freedom of the press.

"Training Minority Journalists: A Case Study of the San Francisco Examiner Intern Program," by Judie Telfer, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley.

A probing look at a "pioneering effort in job training and placement for minority journalists." Nearly half of this study is devoted to interviews with interns who participated in a 1970 summer program at the Berkeley campus of the University of California. As Ms. Telfer accurately states: "In a minority intern training program, the interns themselves are in the spotlight . . . Of all the opinions and reactions, theirs are central to the success or failure of the program." Their sometimes acid comments are probably the best index to the assets and drawbacks of a continuing program that cannot "solve singlehandedly the employment problem for minority journalists," but one that, without "the sweetening of outside funds," does demonstrate a capacity "to make contact with promising young minority men and women" and give them "training and a chance to develop professional skills."

"From Watergate to Witherspoon," by Dennis E. Shoemaker, A.D., September, 1973.

Is the church press free? The editor of *Trends*, a magazine published by the United Presbyterian Church and the United Church of Christ, tells of pressure from church officials and concludes that the editorial freedom of the church press depends "in part on whether the institutional church is being attacked." Shoemaker, who passionately argues for "freedom of the church press," insists that it is possible for church publications to escape being mere house organs, although it may not be possible to escape all restraints—especially where "support of the church" might be compromised.

"50 Years of Communication Research: A Bibliography of M.A. Theses and Ph.D. Dissertations from the School of Journalism, University of Missouri (Columbia, Mo.), 1921-1971," compiled by Erika J. Fischer and Heinz-D. Fischer.

Prepared by a German press historian and his wife, this useful compilation shows the gradual broadening of journalistic research interests. Although initially concentrating on the history of newspapers and magazines, content analysis and the more familiar press problems, "in later years the research titles include the development of radio, television and film as well as public relations, public opinion and propaganda."

DANIEL J. LEAB

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Egil "Bud" Krogh, boss of the White House "plumbing" team that burglarized the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, resigned today as undersecretary of burglary was made known.

—San Gabriel Valley, Calif., Tribune, May 9, 1973.

Steele said investigations of a homosexual ring operating in Dallas had proved fruitless until a young man tipped police on the Cole Avenue organization.

—Dallas Times Herald, Aug. 15, 1973.

enough pilots to fly them. Cambodia has launched a crash program to train more pilots—but that does not mean a lengthy stay at flight school in France.

—Newsweek, Aug. 27, 1973.



UPI Telephoto

COLLISION COURSE — The 6,500-ton car ferry Seto remains jammed against a freighter after the two ships collided near Matsuyama, Japan. One person was killed and nine others injured. The small boat at the left aids in the crew's rescue.

Misplaced caption from Dallas Daily News, Aug. 22, 1973.

Heat Wave Pushes City Into Water

—Philadelphia Bulletin, Aug. 29, 1973.

2 Teenage Girls Arrested on Pot

—Hartford Times, Sept. 14, 1973.

Bomb tossed in Rome

Blast shatters ITT office in New York

—Dallas Times Herald, Sept. 28, 1973.

Women In Political Campaigns To Be Explored At Workshops

—Boulder, Colo., Daily Camera, Aug. 31, 1973.

Nixon Defends Detente With U. S.

—Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 24, 1973.

(WASHINGTON)— SECRETARY OF STATE ROGERS SAID TODAY THERE IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY THE CEASE-FIRE WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE IN WASHINGTON.

—AP wire, Apr. 30, 1973.

WASHINGTON Antitrust suits to update sub 6th grafts whatsoever. The Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. issued a statement saying: "Our initial reaction to the Justice Department complaint is that it is based on misinformation and has no solid legal foundation."

—AP wire, Aug. 10, 1973.

MEDICAL CENTER RECEIVED A CONTRACT FOR 379-THOUSAND, 500,000. THE NEW YORK

METHADONE MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS OFFER INPATIENT CARE AND AFTERCARE

VICES "AS" "ATION" "VOCAL" "ASSIST" "E, MEN"

—AP wire, Sept. 1, 1973.

AP. REFER. WATER. LAIRD SAID. COUNTRY.

IN HIS WORDS, "CANNOT AFFORD TO BE DISTRACTED" FROM SUCH ISSUES AS HEALTH CARE, THE ECONOMY, ECOLOGY AND TEXAS.

—AP wire, June 28, 1973.

Second reading

The president "is a form of king and no one argues with a king."

... The trend toward aloofness from the great mass of our people has been inherent in the office of the presidency from the beginning. The new factor that has been added over the last 20 to 40 years is the rise of mass society and the rise of mass communications. This has meant a shift in the perceptions of the chief executive. No matter how exalted his position in the earlier days, it was impossible for him to think of his nation in any terms other than a collection of people. In a mass society, however, people become statistics, and their leader finds himself dealing more and more with columns of figures.

Politicians do not function effectively in such an atmosphere. The political personality is not made for the cold world of figures. The political world is one in which men excel because they are sensitive, because they can read each other's faces, because they can see the little rising signs of anger when they irritate others, and because they can understand the need to soften the harsh edges of the human personality. This is impossible when they come to rely solely upon computers and upon worldwide communications systems. They need to engage in adversary debate with equals, or their sensitivity deteriorates. The president cannot have that kind of adversary relationship with other people that would enable him to put the computer system in proper perspective. He is a form of king and no one argues with a king. He is isolated from the moment he steps into the White House because everyone around him is his subordinate.

—George E. Reedy,
White House press secretary
under Lyndon B. Johnson
from *The Presidency in Flux*, 1973 ©

